

KEYS



UNISERVITATE  
Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

# Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church

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Uniservitate Collection

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ISBN 978-987-4487-22-3



*Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church / Andres Peregalli... [et al.] ; coordinación general de María Nieves Tapia.- 1a ed.- Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires : CLAYSS, 2021.*  
*Libro digital, PDF - (Uniservitate ; 2)*

*Archivo Digital: descarga y online*

*Traducción de: Karina Marconi ; Cecilia Mata.*

*ISBN 978-987-4487-22-3*

*1. Trabajo Solidario. 2. Pedagogía. 3. Doctrina Social de la Iglesia. I. Peregalli, Andres. II. Tapia, María Nieves, coord. III. Marconi, Karina, trad. IV. Mata, Cecilia, trad.*

*CDD 261.51*

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## ABOUT US

### Uniservitate

*Uniservitate* is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning (SL) in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs). It is an initiative of Porticus and is coordinated by the Latin American Center for Service-Learning (CLAYSS).

The programme's objective is to generate a systemic change through the institutionalisation of service-learning as a tool for higher education institutions to fulfil their mission of offering a comprehensive education to new generations and involving them in an active commitment to the problems of our time.

### Porticus

Porticus coordinates and develops the philanthropic endeavours of the Brenninkmeijer family, whose social engagement stretching back as far as 1841, when Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer founded the C&A company, starting a tradition of doing good while doing business.

Several businesses, charitable foundations and philanthropic programmes joined Porticus and expanded through numerous family initiatives.

Since its foundation in 1995, Porticus has grown to become one of the most committed institutions working to address the challenges of our time, to improve the lives of those most in need and to create a sustainable future where justice and human dignity flourish.

Porticus has two goals which guide their way it works: to listen and learn from the people they seek to serve, and to act on evidence that demonstrates what works.

### CLAYSS

The Latin American Center for Service-Learning—CLAYSS—is a leading organisation for the promotion of service-learning in Latin America, and a worldwide reference. It promotes the development of service-learning in both formal and non-formal education, and provides advice to policy makers, NGO leaders, communities, educators and students.

## The UNISERVITATE collection

The UNISERVITATE Collection is an editorial project of CLAYSS (Latin American Center for Service-Learning) in collaboration with Porticus.

It is aimed at Catholic Higher Education professors and authorities, other educational institutions, specialists in Service-Learning, ecclesiastical leaders, as well as the general public interested in education and social change.

With the contribution and collaboration of outstanding international scholars and specialists, the objective is to offer contributions from different regions and to share multicultural perspectives on topics of interest related to spirituality and the pedagogy of Service-learning in the world.

Each digital book is published in English, Spanish and French, and can be downloaded free of charge from the Uniservitate website: [www.uniservitate.org/](http://www.uniservitate.org/)



## María Beatriz Isola

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to introduce the book *Service-Learning Pedagogy and teachings of the Catholic Church*, a polyhedral text, produced in different parts of the world, as an expression of different voices and an invitation to reflect on Higher Education in view of a greater commitment to the universal human family. We intend to contribute to developing Higher Education Institutions (university and non-university, Catholic and non-denominational) capable of building networks and life, of learning and creating meaning from their being, knowing and doing, *for others and with others*, and not being just cloisters that live *for themselves*. It is a text with a plural, global and diverse perspective, which opens to dialogue and build bridges that contribute to a more fraternal society.

The book offers reflections, evidence, questions and conclusions, as a result of the authors' personal, professional and academic experience. In different parts of the world, they contribute to shape an education with a "flavour of life," rooted in the principles and foundations of the Catholic Church; mother and teacher, beacon and guide, a place of encounter, dialogue and learning for all, which assumes that "(...) those who claim to be unbelievers can sometimes put God's will into practice better than believers." (Pope Francis, 2021, FT, 74)

### The book in the context of the teachings of the Church

Just as the Second Vatican Council expressed in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, being the Church in today's world implies assuming closeness and response to the pains, sufferings and hopes of our time. A proposal that continues to be valid, which has been and is a plan for life:

the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ and the Church. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds. (GS, 1).

Along with the horizons and functions characteristic of any Higher Education Institution, its Catholic identity calls upon to address vitally and in a Christian spirit the challenges of today's society. And in this sense, the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* of Saint John Paul II remains a compass and source of inspiration for Higher Education. Thus, besides the pillars of Higher Education in general (teaching, research and services) the particular objectives for Catholic-based institutions are as follow:

generation of wisdom and production of knowledge based on a solidarity humanism, solid academic education committed to contemporary problems, connection between science and faith, engagement with culture and an explicit call to engage with society (John Paul II, 1990, 30-37), a debt that is still pending in many academic fields.

Benedict XVI, addressing the world of education in Rome, appealed for urgent training in values: “there is a talk of a great ‘educational emergency’, confirmed by the failures we encounter all too often in our efforts to form sound people who can cooperate with others and give their own lives meaning.” (21st January, 2008). Thus, Catholic Higher Education cannot be developed without a clear foundation and commitment to a comprehensive training in values, cross-cutting its different functions; because academic excellence necessarily integrates commitment and solidarity with the human aspect and the *polis*, with their unjust realities.

*Many Catholic Higher Education Institutions are suffering an identity crisis, weakening their possibility of offering a holistic, humanistic and solidarity education.*

In recent years, Pope Francis has insisted on the need to “go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the

Gospel” (EG, 20), and has repeatedly asked Catholic Higher Education Institutions to offer their students the opportunity to involve “head, heart and hands” (2020) to meet the challenges of the world outside the faculties. Thus, he has highlighted the need to integrate the language of the head, the heart and the hands, uniting learning and service.

Institutional fragmentation between objectives, academic and pastoral departments; between teaching, research and social engagement, and the contradictions between formal statements and institutional practices, call for a profound revision of the meaning of Higher Education. This is the topic addressed by the book at a time when many Catholic Higher Education Institutions are suffering an identity crisis, weakening their possibility of offering a *holistic, humanistic and solidarity education*. In this sense, the terms “Learning”, “Service” and “Teachings of the Catholic Church” become more pertinent and relevant, to institutionalize a pedagogical, integrating and transdisciplinary approach in Higher Education.

## The Catholic Church and Service-learning

The Church has a long tradition of including community service in educational settings; because it is part of that community, it has always been rooted in it and it is God’s people

who walk in this world. Pastoral activities make it easier to go forth and meet the suffering neighbour. In some Catholic Higher Education Institutions, almost by instinct, various integration projects are implemented, promoting a service to the community based on the curriculum. Projects that could be defined actually as Service-Learning.

But Service-Learning, specifically, has developed as an educational approach for more than 50 years. This concept can be found under different names and terms, according to the different languages and cultures of the five continents: Service-Learning, *Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario*, ApS and A+S, just to name a few. A pedagogical approach that shows how education cannot remain oblivious to its surrounding environment or dissociate or fragment the human person and their integral development. It is the *solidarity service that promotes the encounter of human beings, that delves into a quality academic, personal and professional training*, it is not a marginal or secondary additional training.

The specificity of Service-Learning consists in the particular students' protagonism generating specific learning projects, within the curriculum, at the service of the community and developed *together with* the community. There are three essential characteristics (Tapia, 2000, 26-27): a) a solidarity service aimed at addressing, in a limited and effective way, real and felt needs of a community, and not only *for* it, b) led by students actively engaged from planning to assessment, c) intentionally connected with the learning contents, i.e. including the curriculum content, reflection on practice, development of professional and citizenship skills, and research connected with the solidarity practice.

Today, at university and higher education levels, service-learning has been implemented in important education centres, pioneers worldwide in their implementation as well as in research, with a great impact on teaching and learning methods, research projects and university social responsibility, through the integration of community engaged academic activities.

In recent years, through the Global Compact on Education (*Instrumentum Laboris*, 2020: pp. 16-17), the Magisterium of the Catholic Church enlightens and contributes to delve into service-learning to achieve a comprehensive education approach and join what is fragmented: theory and practice; inside and outside the classroom, manual and intellectual education. Thus, what many lay people represented and disseminated as a pedagogical advancement in the light of the ecclesial Magisterium, today it is the same Church in and through the pastors, who offers it to society to conceive education as a concretion of the Christian message, drawing on pedagogical approaches and experiences from a variety of different fields.

## The book: a text for all with global and local reflections

The guiding principle of this book is the reflection on *Service-Learning and the teachings of the Church*; its central argument refers to the analysis of education from these complementary perspectives that are called to articulate and mutually enrich for the best achievement of Catholic Higher Education objectives and education in general. The encounter

*The encounter between (Service-Learning and teachings of the Church) is a clear example of dialogue and enrichment between a pedagogy that is for all and a Church that wants to contribute to building a common home, promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and environmental care.*

between both issues (Service-Learning and teachings of the Church) is a clear example of dialogue and enrichment between a pedagogy that is for all and a Church that wants to contribute to building a common home, promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and environmental care.

A detailed analysis of the chapters of this book allows us to find a central argument: the *progressive deepening of the Church educational mission, updating its rich history forged in formidable and hopeful educators and movements over time*. Likewise, the organization of the text allows readers to make their own journey: *each chapter is autonomous, has its own “music” and a particular identity, but at the same time contributes to a polyphony of voices and harmonic sounds, a common identity*.

It is a rich reflection, also due to its interculturality, the result of a research, professionalism, experience and solidarity commitment of authors who come from different regions and existential, social and cultural places.

The text provides specific and rigorous literature, in a friendly language, regarding some unexplored areas and languages on each argument. It addresses from the Magisterium and the Catholic Social Teaching to the social mission of Higher Education Institutions. In this context, there are significant issues for the current education: integral education (hands, head, heart), solidarity humanism, social responsibility, rights, the Church's call for justice, peace and sustainable development, youth leadership, Global Education Pact, solidarity, global educational citizenship and fraternity.

## The chapters: a thematic and multicultural range of topics

*To face a Higher Education based on a new interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective.*

The range of topics addressed, as well as the diversity of the authors' origins and training, enriches the reflection by providing the

reader with clues for research and arguments to face a Higher Education based on a new interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective. A brief overview of the nine chapters is provided below:

- ▶ From Argentina, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and Primate of Argentina Mario Aurelio Poli shares unpublished texts of the Magisterium of Pope Francis, that enrich his call to solidarity, the culture of encounter and fraternity.
- ▶ Adam Biela, Dorota Kornas-Biela, Mariola Teresa Kozubek and Wuwer Arkadiusz, from Poland (The John Paul II University of Lublin and University of Silesia in Katowice), address solidarity in the teachings of St. John Paul II. They take an in-depth look at this central concept in his life and pontificate, and link it with service-learning and higher education, offering avenues for its realization.
- ▶ Father Xavier Alphonse, S.J. (Loyola College) from India, reflects on the social responsibility of Catholic Higher Education Institutions according to the teachings of the Church and the main aspects of the Catholic Social Teaching. He focuses his reflection from his local experience, by analysing the value of service-learning as a pedagogy that contributes to achieving a better society in contexts of profound inequality.
- ▶ From Kenya, Rev. Prof. Sahaya G. Selvam, SDB (Marist International University College, Nairobi) and Brenda Kiema (Tangaza University College, Nairobi) discuss how to achieve the educational agenda of *Fratelli Tutti* through service-learning, linking it with the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* and specific experiences in higher education.
- ▶ Michelle Sterk Barrett (Holy Cross College), from the United States, reflects on how to update the mission and holistic education through service-learning. Her chapter connects reflection with emerging research evidence, providing a solid analysis about service-learning and her contribution to the development of a fraternal spirituality.
- ▶ Italo Florín (LUMSA), from Italy, delves into the need for a new educational paradigm, introducing the new idea of the Global Compact on Education launched by Pope Francis and the specific contribution of service-learning. He also highlights the mutual enrichment of these issues: service-learning,

and its rich pedagogical tradition towards the Church; and the Church, and its millenary experience, towards service-learning.

- ▶ From Belgium, Ellen Van Stichel (Leuven) reflects on service-learning as a response to the Church's call for justice, peace and sustainable development. After an analysis of these concepts, she considers service-learning as a way to achieve this appeal.
- ▶ Yolanda Ruiz, from Spain (Catholic University of Valencia) deepens the challenges of the current reality, and how the experience of a Global Citizenship Education favours the transition from a conceived fraternity to an experienced solidarity. The experience of Scholas Ocurrentes shows the evident value of service-learning embodied in education.
- ▶ Finally, from Argentina, Mariano García (CLAYSS-Uniservitate), addresses the contributions of the *Synod on Young People* that opened a new interpretation and understanding of today's youth and the importance of their role in education. Service-learning is seen as a realization and facilitation tool for such leadership, significantly integrating the different functions of higher education institutions and resignifying the campus ministry.

This is how this book is articulated, going from *prophecy to incarnation*, seeking to provide new opportunities to authorities, professors, students and organizations, to generate answers for today's world. An online text, available in three languages (Spanish, English and French) that seeks to reach different regions and propose multiple bibliographic resources for reflection, like the rest of the books in the *Uniservitate* collection, contributing to the development of Higher Education on behalf of the community.

## Challenges, answers, questions and dreams

This publication addresses challenges, provides answers, and poses new questions. This work is made available to the reader as a result of a process of several months of shared work through discussion, research, exchanges and feedback, with the intention of constituting a community of authors who share much more than just writing a text. They communicate a common and plural vision about how we dream about the world and education, and where service, engagement, solidarity and hope are a part of our lives and the institutional culture, a part of its organizational design, identity and mission.

To those who have an inner vocation for service, these pages will awaken your hope of meeting people, institutions and networks that are already committed to this change; because *“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does*

*listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.*" (Paul VI, 1975, EN, 41). The text is offered as a gift and a contribution to the world, with the purpose of reaching to all, teaching to all and delivering to all, so that solidarity is embodied in every context and in every region, with specific features of a humanity that needs to reinvent itself every day.

We invite readers to enjoy this book, be inspired by it and enrich it with new reflections and practices, so that it becomes action and contributes to building the Global Compact on Education and the dream of all being brothers and sisters. Because the experience of solidarity and love unite us and gathers us; they build us as one humanity, making God's dream come true on this earth.

**Andrés Peregalli and M. Beatriz Isola**

*Buenos Aires, october 2021*



## Mario Aurelio Poli, Cardinal

*I was born in (Buenos Aires), in the Monte Castro neighbourhood. We were five in my beloved family, with my father Mario Mariano, lathe operator, Italian, my mother, Josefina Felisa, dressmaker, Argentinian, and my siblings, Silvio and Ana. The Christian education that I received at home and in the Catholic scout movement, was completed with primary school in a State school: "Martín Fierro". Then I shared my youth with many friends, among them Jews and Muslims, at the Parish Institute "San Pedro Apóstol," while we were in high school; it was an unforgettable experience sharing different creeds. After a year as an Agronomy student, I decided to go to the*

*School of Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA in its acronym in Spanish), where I got my degree as a Social Worker (1967-1970). Sharing my course with mostly women taught me to value and appreciate them and learn many things from them. When I was twenty years old, I was called to serve in the Argentine Army, in the Communications Battalion 601; a human experience different from the previous ones, but just as profitable in knowledge and earning a few friends. In 1971, I entered the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Buenos Aires. Filled with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council in that school of virtue, mercifulness and fraternity, with really good priests, eight blessed years went by, which were illuminated by human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual training, the latter one in the School of Theology of the Argentine Catholic University (UCA in its acronym in Spanish), where I have also been a teacher over thirty years in the chairs of Church History and Patrology.*

*On 25th November, 1978, I was ordained a priest by Cardinal Juan Carlos Aramburu and after a year as a vicar in San Cayetano, in the Liniers neighbourhood, I was assigned as a trainer of the Seminary. For twelve years, I was in charge of various communities in the Major Seminar and in 1992 I was appointed by Cardinal Antonio Quarracino as Principal of the San José Vocational Institute (Introductory Propaedeutic course). In February 2002, Pope John Paul II appointed me as Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires. The ordination was celebrated in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral and was presided over by Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, on 20th April, 2002. A week later, I was appointed to the Flores Vicariate until 2008 when Pope Benedict XVI honoured me by appointing me as bishop to the diocese of Santa Rosa in the province of La Pampa. In March 2013, I was preaching the Novena in the San José de Rancul parish church, in the northwest of the province, when the Apostolic Nuncio called me in to announce that the newly elected Pope appointed me as Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Pope Francis himself added me to the cardinal body during the consistory of 22nd February, 2014, under the title of Cardinal Priest of St. Robert Bellarmine. After three years, I proposed the dream of a Synod to my brother bishops, who first met in 2017 and we are about to celebrate the Synodal Assembly in the coming months of 2021, if it is our Father's loving plan.*

*I chose Solomon's prayer as my motto: «Give me, Lord, a heart that listens» 1Re 3,9.*

## 2. THE TEACHINGS OF POPE FRANCIS: FRATERNAL LOVE AND THE CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER<sup>1</sup>

Cardinal Mario Aurelio Poli

Archbishop of Buenos Aires and Primate of Argentina

*“Those who do not love a brother or sister  
whom they have seen,  
cannot love God whom they have not seen” (1 Jn 4, 20).*

FT 61

To introduce the encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis, I will try, based on a careful reading, to go over some documents and catechesis of the already extensive teaching of the Holy Father, the constant aspiration for a more fraternal world, his social projection and the necessary building of bridges of understanding, based on one of his most insistent proposals in his teaching: “the culture of encounter.” As in the magisterium of the Pontiff, the actions go hand in hand with his teachings, I will observe the synodal and missionary style, characteristic of these eight years in the Chair of Saint Peter.

The dominant theme in the encyclical letter is fraternal love in its universal dimension, excluding no one, which must be projected in society in terms of social friendship.

Reading his writings and entering into his way of understanding humanity from the perspective of faith, is an exercise that invites us to dream of him, and at the same time, to yearn, desire, imagine, think and materialize the aspiration of a Church that responds every day to its mission and not give in to the utopia of a world where fraternal love restores the dignity deserved by everyone with whom we share our common home.

The first words reveal the sources of inspiration for this encyclical letter. The Pope claims that Saint Francis of Assisi, «the saint of fraternal love», has enlightened him to write the encyclical *Laudato si'* and also the one that concerns us, on fraternity and social friendship. What is astonishing is that the surprising *Wisdom of the poor one*—the title of the first essay on Saint Francis by Eloi Leclerc, OFM—has been the inspiring source of so many subjects that aspire to a more humane and fraternal world<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, in the *Rule* that he left to his brothers and in *The Canticle of Creatures*, the Pope discovers the essential

1 This text corresponds to the participation of Cardinal Poli in the International Seminar on the encyclical letter of Pope Francis “Fratelli Tutti”: “Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti. On fraternity and social friendship”, carried out at the Catholic University of Argentina, Buenos Aires, on 10th May, 2021. <https://youtu.be/R6xbjV6oc60>

2 The Pope quotes *Exile and Tenderness*, by the same author.

words for an open fraternity, capable of relating to the created things, feeling himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, and even calling death itself a sister.

Saint Francis, *il povero di Asissi*, «he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society» (FT 4).

This main idea, present from the beginning of his pontifical magisterium, is included in the memorable encyclical letter written in four hands, *Lumen Fidei*, which completed Pope Benedict's teaching on the theological virtues that underpin the Christian life as of Baptism<sup>3</sup>. It is here where Pope Francis describes the social dimension of faith lived in the family and outlines his cherished longing for a more fraternal society: «Absorbed and deepened in the family, faith becomes a light capable of illuminating all our relationships in society. As an experience of the mercy of God the Father, it sets us on the path of brotherhood. Modernity sought to build a universal brotherhood based on equality, yet we gradually came to realize that this brotherhood, lacking a reference to a common Father as its ultimate foundation, cannot endure. We need to return to the true basis of brotherhood»<sup>4</sup>. This was taught in June 2013.

That year in November, the Pope gave us *Evangelii Gaudium* where the concepts of *fraternity, fraternal love and the culture of encounter* link and sustain the proclamation of the Gospel in today's society. He warned us: «Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love»<sup>5</sup>... «How dangerous and harmful this is, for it makes us lose our amazement, our excitement and our zeal for living the Gospel of fraternity and justice!»<sup>6</sup>. And, reflecting on the process of consolidation of a society, he indicated the need for «a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter»<sup>7</sup>.

Since then the pastoral magisterium of the Supreme Pontiff has brought to light the most sensitive challenges to the Church and the human community. This is how he echoed themes such as the family, the care of creation, children and young people, refugees, immigrants, the elderly discarded by insensitive societies: they are the faces of an unworthy poverty, which is scandalously growing in many parts of the world, a wound of humanity expressed in figures in statistics, while making the suffering of millions of people invisible. Many of these causes are heard and taken up by the Pope in a magisterium that at times reaches an unquestionable projection like *Laudato si'*, the thought and orientations of

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3 See *Lumen Fidei* 7.

4 *Lumen Fidei* 54. Compare *Fratelli Tutti* 219 and 272.

5 EG, 101.

6 EG, 179.

7 EG, 220.

which occupy the agenda of international forums, universities, and continues to awaken adherence in many intellectual, pastoral, popular movements and academic environments.

Precisely, in the encyclical letter on the common home—May 2015—after describing the state of the blue planet due to two centuries of devastating policies, the consequences of which are suffered mainly by the poor, Francis, to start a common change strategy, proposes a new contemplative look on the world and the necessary fraternal relationship, which is present in all the cultures of the world with different nuances: «If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs»<sup>8</sup>.

Francis affirms that caring for the common home “is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters. Fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us. That is why it is possible to love our enemies»<sup>9</sup>.

In the context of the second stage of the Synod on the Family -October 2015- on the occasion of half a century since Saint Paul VI created the Episcopal Synods<sup>10</sup>, Pope Francis delivered a «historic» speech on the exercise of synodality in the life of the Church, and that is where he predicted: «It is precisely this path of ‘synodality’ which God expects of the Church of the third millennium»<sup>11</sup>. «A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening “is more than simply hearing”». It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he “says to the Churches” (Rev 2:7) ... «The Synod process begins by listening to the people of God, which “shares also in Christ’s prophetic office”, according to a principle dear to the Church of the first millennium: Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari debet.<sup>12</sup>” [What touches everyone, must be treated by everyone].

I witnessed that teaching, pope Francis has practiced it through hours and days of listening in the Synod Hall, attending hundreds of presentations from all over the world.

8 Laudato si´ 11

9 Laudato si´ 228

10 Apostolic Letter *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, promulgated *Motu Proprio* of Pope Paul VI, by which the Synod of Bishops for the Universal Church is constituted (September 15, 1965).

11 Ceremony commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops. Speech of the Holy Father Francis. Paul VI Audience Hall. Saturday (17th October, 2015).

12 Ibidem.

Then, when he finishes his speech, he imagines the projection of ecclesial synodality on humanity: «A synodal Church is like a standard lifted up among the nations (cf. Is 11:12) ... As a Church which “journeys together” with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples and of the function of authority as service will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.»<sup>13</sup>. Here I cannot help saying what this renewal of the doctrine of synodality meant for the particular Churches, further enriched by the contribution of the International Theological Commission: *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (2018).

*Amoris Laetitia* is the result of this synodal listening, and Francis sees in the family institution the mirror of Trinitarian love<sup>14</sup>, where the values and virtues that define a person’s entire life are cultivated:

«Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous – even repeated – forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life» (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1657)<sup>15</sup>...«Christian marriages thus enliven society by their witness of fraternity, their social concern, their outspokenness on behalf of the underprivileged, their luminous faith and their active hope».

*«Your spiritual growth is expressed above all by your growth in fraternal, generous and merciful love. (...) How wonderful it would be to experience this ‘ecstasy’ of coming out of ourselves and seeking the good of others, even to the sacrifice of our lives» ... «If fraternal love is the «new commandment», «the fullness of the Law» and our best way of showing our love for God, then it has to have a primary place in every project of youth formation and growth to maturity.»*

With a colloquial and youthful language, Francis addressed young people with the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: «Your spiritual growth is expressed above all by your growth in fraternal, generous and merciful love. (...) How wonderful it would be to experience this ‘ecstasy’ of coming out of ourselves and seeking the good of others, even to the sacrifice of our lives»<sup>16</sup> ... «If fraternal love is the «new commandment»

(Jn 13:34), «the fullness of the Law» (Rm 13:10) and our best way of showing our love for

13 Ibidem.

14 Cfr. AL, 172.

15 AL, 86.

16 *Christus vivit*, 163.

God, then it has to have a primary place in every project of youth formation and growth to maturity.”<sup>17</sup>

In one of the catechesis entitled: «Healing the world», the Pope advocated that: «... the creativity of the Holy Spirit encourage us to generate new forms of familiar hospitality, fruitful fraternity and universal solidarity <sup>18</sup>.»

The encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, in tune with the great social documents of the Church and bearing a distinct synodal style, shows its ecumenical and interreligious openness when it declares that «who has spoken forcefully of our need to care for creation. In this case, I have felt particularly encouraged by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb». When reading the Abu Dhabi document, *on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, of February 2019, it should be taken into account as a source of immediate inspiration. I believe that all of us have been touched by such joint declaration that draws on Abrahamic roots and shines itself as a light of hope for the great human family: «In the name of human fraternity that embraces all human beings, unites them and renders them equal. In the name of this fraternity torn apart by policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women». The Pope himself states that the encyclical letter resumes and develops the great issues raised in that document that they signed together.

Finally, I focus on the last chapter of *Fratelli Tutti*, where Francis, after admitting that «without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity»<sup>19</sup>, recognizes and assumes the valuable contribution of knowledge of people, such as the ancestral wisdom of so many creeds in the world because «often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women»<sup>20</sup>. At the same time, it is affirmed in the Christian tradition that has guided his reflection, and for a reason: «“if the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth. If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, our workplaces, our political and financial life, then we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman». Others drink from other sources. For us the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises, “for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to

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17 Idem, 215.

18 Public audience on 2nd September, 2020, at the San Damaso courtyard.

19 FT 272.

20 FT 277.

the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all”»<sup>21</sup>.

*«I offer this social Encyclical as a modest contribution to continued reflection, in the hope that in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words».*

If we want to join his dreams and desires, let us listen to his intention once again: «I offer this social Encyclical as a modest contribution to continued reflection, in the hope that in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove

capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words»<sup>22</sup>.

«It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity»<sup>23</sup>.

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### 3. ST. JOHN PAUL II AND SOLIDARITY. FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TO TESTIMONY OF SERVICE

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#### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the concept of solidarity in the teaching of John Paul II. First, we characterize the genesis and development of the various scopes of this concept in relation to the ontological and ethical foundations of individual human existence (the scarcity and abundance of the human person) as well as to the challenge facing every human being - building a community of solidarity and communion in social space.

Solidarity is a virtue, a good habit of individual human beings. Its social character is expressed in cooperating with others, organizing oneself for the common work of justice, and acting for the common good. Cooperation for the good of all produces a synergistic effect, since the common good exceeds the sum of individual goods.

Based on the Christian concept of man and solidarity, the teaching of John Paul II will be characterized in relation to the academic world and universities as a common good. The role of the university is education in the perspective of participation in a community of teachers and learners. The point of studying is, after all, not only to acquire knowledge but also wisdom, and this is achieved by being open to the needy, acting for the benefit of others, serving in solidarity. Next, we show the relationship between solidarity as seen by John Paul II, especially in relation to higher education. Theoretical considerations will be illustrated with examples from the experience of studies conducted, among others, at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, in the spirit of teaching by serving in solidarity.

The last part brings to light the common concepts in the anthropological and ethical dimension of solidarity in the thought of Karol Wojtyła, expressed in the personalistic norm, the theory of participation and the common good, and the main principles of *aprendizaje servicio solidale* pedagogy (learning by serving in solidarity).

## Introduction

*The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of “friendship” or “social charity”, is a direct demand of human and Christian Brotherhood (CCC, 1992, n. 1939).* In this statement from the Catechism of the Catholic Church we find both a reference to the dynamic tradition of the Church teaching solidarity and the essence of John Paul II's understanding of it (see John Paul II, 1991, n. 10).

His three encyclicals deal most extensively with solidarity: *Laborem exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), and *Centesimus annus* (1991). However, many of the themes appearing in these encyclicals have their roots in Karol Wojtyła's earlier writings, such as *Love and Responsibility* (1960) and *Person and Act* (1968)<sup>24</sup>. Solidarity as portrayed in them is a very broad concept. Wojtyła/John Paul II presents it as a universal value, a natural human predisposition, a virtue and a moral and social attitude, a principle of social life, a manifestation of Christian love or a mission of the Church. It is also widely understood: from interpersonal relations, through family and social relations, work, public – spirited attitude, statehood and economic order to international and global relations. Although the concept of solidarity in relation to the academic world *in explicite* appears relatively

*The university is, after all, also a working environment, a community of persons, a place of education, and a space of formation that refers to values and virtues. All those involved in academic life also share a common goal of their commitment - to build bridges between the theory acquired in the course of study and the practice of commitment to social responsibility.*

rarely, much of the content concerning solidarity can be applied to it by analogy. The university is, after all, also a working environment, a community of persons, a place of education, and a space of formation that refers to values and virtues. All those involved in academic life also share a common goal of their commitment - to build bridges between the theory

acquired in the course of study and the practice of commitment to social responsibility. Service Learning Pedagogy has much to offer in this regard.

24 The first editions in Polish: *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (1960); *Osoba i czyn* (1968). Editions in English: *Love and Responsibility* (2019); *Person and Act and Related Essays (English Critical Edition of the Works of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II)* (2021).

## 1. Theoretical and practical dimensions of solidarity

Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II's thought on solidarity follows two mutually supportive paths: philosophical-anthropological and Theological-Christological. On both paths, one can see imprints of in-depth studies combined with life experience. Studies, didactic and scholarly work, articles and books, which - despite censorship applied in Poland at the time (cfr. Wierzbicki, 2021, pp. 64-65) - gained considerable resonance, allow us to reconstruct the stages of Wojtyła's reflection on solidarity. It focuses on two ideas: solidarity is an ontic quality and solidarity is expressed through personalism.

When as a 9-year-old child Wojtyła lost his mother, he experienced family solidarity; when during World War II he became a quarry worker at the Solvay factory, he experienced worker solidarity; as a lecturer, he organized vacation trips for students – he experienced academic solidarity; in times of totalitarianism, both Nazi and Communist, he experienced social and political solidarity; as a priest, he experienced ecclesial solidarity in the face of persecution by the state regime. On this path, he matures in particular the idea that solidarity is a form of social love, that it is intimately connected with the natural and supernatural dignity of man.

Ultimately, John Paul II's mature account of solidarity in the philosophical-anthropological stream consists of two elements: ontological-personalistic and axiological-ethical.

The first emphasizes that solidarity has its source in the ontological essence of man and woman, in the simultaneous scarcity and abundance of the person. The simultaneous "lack and surplus" inherent in human nature enable and oblige man to communicate with others, to exchange gifts. The coexistence and cooperation of man with another man, with many/all people, is the fundamental cause of social life and its ontic reason. It is also the beginning of solidarity - an interpersonal bond of a special kind. Man binds himself to the other as an individual and as a community of persons to form a "we" - a communion. "The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons." (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 39).

The axiological-ethical dimension of solidarity emphasizes that acting in solidarity is the imperative of practical reason. It points to solidarity as a way of "overcoming *natural* obstacles in development" and recognizes the "growing awareness of interdependence among peoples and nations" as a "positive and moral value", "as a virtue". (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38). Embracing and practicing solidarity requires the right way of thinking and acting. For all people,

*whether or not they are inspired by a religious faith, will become fully aware of the urgent need to change the spiritual attitudes which define each individual's relationship with self, with neighbor, with even the remotest human communities, and with nature itself* (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38).

Whereas for Christians, as for all who recognize the precise theological meaning of the word "sin," a change of behavior or mentality or mode of existence is called "conversion," to use the language of the Rihle (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38). This view of solidarity can be applied to three aspects: ethical, institutional, and pragmatic.

The ethical aspect emphasizes that adopting an attitude of solidarity must be a decision of a free and responsible subject. However, being free, he may not make such a decision. This places the whole problem on the level of morality: subjective, that of the human conscience, and objective, that of the moral order which is the condition of integral progress, "populorum progressio". Solidarity, then, is a moral attitude, embodied in human moral and social capacities, which consists in directing the freedom of the individual towards the common good.

The institutional aspect of solidarity is of particular importance when the principle of justice is threatened systemically by

*"the desire for excessive profit and power", by "exploitation, oppression, annihilation of others". The "evil mechanisms" and "structures of sin" [...] can be overcome only through the exercise of the human and Christian solidarity to which the Church calls us and which she tirelessly promotes* (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 40).

Solidarity takes on the character of a juridical norm when it points to the reciprocal relationships and responsibilities that exist between the person and social structures. It requires structures and people committed to the good of the neighbor (preferential option benefitting the poor), up to evangelical radicalism. In this way the principle of solidarity dovetails with the ideas of justice, charity and subsidiarity.

The pragmatic aspect emphasizes the conditions that must exist for solidarity to be practiced. It reminds us that solidarity is analogous, i.e. it is realized in every society, but by different means and in different ways. As responsibility for oneself and for all, it should go hand in hand with effectiveness. It is therefore a universal value, binding for all levels of society (from the family to the global community) and, at the same time, a particular value that has different concretizations. Of particular practical importance for solidarity are work, dialogue, as well as the basic moral categories of justice and love and the social principles of the common good and subsidiarity. Wojtyła summarizes these elements as follows:

*Solidarity is opposed to understanding society in terms of struggle against, and of social relations in terms of uncompromising opposition to classes. Solidarity, which derives its origin and strength from the nature of human work, and therefore from the priority of the human person over things, will create a tool of dialogue and cooperation, allowing for the resolution of contradictions without striving to destroy the enemy. No, the claim that the world of work can be made a world of justice is not a utopia (John Paul II, 1982).*

The Theological-Christological current of solidarity is expressed by John Paul II in three ways: in the Trinitarian, soteriological and ecclesiological aspects.

The Trinitarian aspect is most deeply rooted in the Trinitarian mystery, more specifically in the ontological relationship of solidarity: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes the supernatural dignity of man and points to God as “the model of the unity of the human race.” The soteriological aspect finds the deepest sense of solidarity in the person and message of Christ. The ecclesiological aspect of solidarity emphasizes its agapic and communal meaning.

*This specifically Christian communion, jealously preserved, extended and enriched with the Lord's help, is the soul of the Church's vocation to be a “sacrament,” in the sense already indicated (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 40).*

One of the most important sources of experience of the Church and reflection on ecclesial solidarity was for Karol Wojtyła his participation in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962-1965). Its documents recorded the principle:

*For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything dividing them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary; freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case (GS, n. 92).*

Twenty-two years later, John Paul II related it to the concrete context of his homeland:

*“Bear one another's burdens” - this concise phrase of the Apostle is an inspiration for interpersonal and social solidarity. Solidarity means one and the other, and if burden, then burden carried together, in community. So never: one against the other. One against the other. And never a “burden” carried by man alone. Without the help of others. There can be no struggle stronger than solidarity (John Paul II, 1987c, n. 7).*

Thus, solidarity demands the right moral and social attitude. The path to fraternity and social friendship leads through teaching to serve and serving to teach: respect for every human person; respect for the true values and culture of others; respect for the legiti-

mate autonomy and right of others to self-determination; overcoming selfishness to understand and promote the good of others; personal generosity for progress and development, promoting equality and justice; building structures. Pope Francis will take up this thought when he writes that:

*“Solidarity finds concrete expression in service, which can take a variety of forms in an effort to care for others”* (Pope Francis, 2020a, FT, 115).

## 2. John Paul II on solidarity to the academic world

Solidarity arises from “loving the other’s identity *as much as our own*”, *as did the early Christians, who [...] brought and demonstrated a new way of life, an authentic fraternal solidarity, a new type of society, a community, in which the Trinitarian roots of human coexistence were at work.* At the same time *Christ’s followers, in order to be faithful to their vocation, must give concrete proof that the Gospel is life both for souls and for the whole of society* (John Paul II, 1983, 3-4). Through such solidarity there is unity among the members of the “social body”(Ibid).

Schools, universities, and scientific institutes of various kinds are also such “social bodies.” Their task is not only to teach and research, to develop concrete programs of action and to form wise citizens, but also to shed light on the moral conscience of people. Pointing to the principle of solidarity as the basis of the economy of communion and the just sharing of goods, and to the necessity of sacrifices and dedication on behalf of the needy, is necessary because the development of all humanity depends to a large extent on interpersonal solidarity (cfr. John Paul II, 1997). What does John Paul II propose in this regard?

In the *encyclical Laborem exercens*, the Pope addressed the problem of solidarity in relation to work. He distinguished between work in an objective sense (e.g. tools of work, technical achievements, infrastructure and working environment) and in a subjective sense (it is always man who is the subject of work). At the university, the subjects of work include researchers, teachers, employees in the organization and administration of the university. Because of the natural and supernatural dignity of man, work is for him, not he for work. Giving priority to work over man leads to his alienation. Hence *there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers* (John Paul II, 1981, LE, 8). The action through which the worker can actually be more subject of his work are the trade unions. In Poland the largest of them, founded in 1980 and inspired by the teachings of John Paul II, is called “Solidarity” (*Solidarność* in Polish).

The solidarity of universities towards working people is expressed in activities of an educational, instructional, and self-educational nature, *what are known as workers' or people's universities and the training programmes*. Thanks to the work of their unions and the cooperation of universities with the working - class environment, *workers will not only have more, but above all be more: in other words, that they will realize their humanity more fully in every respect* (John Paul II, 1981, LE, 20).

In this encyclical the Christocentric and eschatological emphasis on work and solidarity of working people is very clear. John Paul II emphasized that Christ *belongs to the 'working world', he has appreciation and respect for human work*. He stands in solidarity with every working man and looks with love upon him, seeing in every work *a particular facet of man's likeness with God* (John Paul II, 1981, 26). It is true that man can find in his work a particle of Christ's Cross, but there is also a glimpse of his Resurrection to "new life" in it. Ultimately, the solidarity of work contained on the pages of *Laborem exercens* has a paschal dimension.

In his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II pointed out that the attitude of solidarity is "compelled" by the growing conviction of interdependence and a common destiny to build together if the annihilation of all is to be avoided (see John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 26). Referring to Pope Paul VI's thought that *the duty of solidarity is the moral obligation*, he defined solidarity as *a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue'* (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 9).

*It is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people" but "is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good"; "with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to "serve him" instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage.* (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38).

Solidarity, like any virtue, "rewards" the one who practices it.

*"Solidarity helps us to see the "other" "as our "neighbor", a "helper" (cfr. Gen 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God"* (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 39).

Practicing solidarity in relation to the academic community implies that its members recognize each other as persons. Staff (academic, teaching, and administrative), as persons with greater resources of knowledge and possibilities for action, should feel more responsible towards students and be ready to share with them what they possess. Students, on the other hand, acting in the same spirit of solidarity, should not assume passive, receiving, demanding attitudes, but should also make their due contribution to

the common good. Each group should respect and support the worthy aspirations of the other (cfr. John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 39).

In the light of faith, solidarity among the members of the academic community, as “the art of loving our neighbor for God’s sake and his own,” leads to true communion. If each for each is *the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit*, then conscience commands him to relate to the other with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person’s sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one’s life for the brethren (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 40).

In the encyclical *Centesimus annus*, John Paul II emphasized even more strongly the relationship between community and solidarity. The emphasis, however, was on arguments from natural law. Man was created by God for a *relationship of solidarity and communion with others for which God created him* (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 41). Accordingly, universities, through the solidarity of teachers and students, should contribute to *enhancing every individual’s dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God’s call* (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 29).

This, of course, requires effort, sacrifice, the practice of the virtues, a willingness to live the “logic of gift and selflessness,” a willingness to make sacrifices. Therefore, in the teaching process, in addition to the knowledge of the humanities and philosophy, which help to understand oneself as a “social being”, the student should have the conditions to assimilate Christian spirituality and the social teaching of the Church, which can help him understand his true identity and recognize his ultimate destiny (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 54).

According to John Paul II, universities are a community of solidarity of different generations with a common goal and task - the service of knowledge, that is truth. It does not refer only to the area of technology, natural or social sciences, culture or art. Knowing the truth makes sense in itself. Pure “scientific theory” is a form of human *praxis*, but a believing professor or student expects the highest *praxis*, uniting him with God through eternal life (cfr. John Paul II, 1980, 5).

Professors build academic solidarity by serving the truth out of love for the truth itself, but also out of love for the students whom they teach and form. In this way, they create a solidary community of people *who are free in the truth - united by love for the truth as well as by mutual love in the truth, a community of people for whom love of the truth constitutes the principle of their unifying bond* (John Paul II, 1987a, 2).

The principle of solidarity between them is therefore the love of truth. Thanks to this, the university has always been an environment of concern for people in need. By reflecting upon their own cognition, people at the university, more easily than outside it, feel obliged to act in defense of the truth and in defense of those who desire it. This means, on the one hand, the ability to transcend oneself in the truth (to demand it of oneself even if no one demands it) and, on the other hand, to form bonds with society, nation and homeland. Every university – serving the universe of humanity – is to serve God and the homeland in the first place (*ordo caritatis*). John Paul II concluded his address to the community of the Catholic University of Lublin, whose motto is *Deo et Patriae*, with the call: *University! Alma Mater! Serve the Truth! If you serve the Truth, you serve Freedom. Liberating man and nation. You serve Life!* (John Paul II, 1987b, 9).

The university is to build its subjectivity “*from within*” – by the professors and students themselves – and “*from without*” – because of the society among which they live and whom they serve (John Paul II, 1987a, n. 4). Therefore, proper cooperation with state authorities is essential. They are to ensure the autonomy of the university’s operation, enable or support the development of infrastructure, and provide students with living conditions that enable them to focus on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of their personalities. It is then that universities can fulfill their developmental, solidarity and cultural mission. Solidarity also entails strategic thinking: it is impossible for students to see no prospects in their own homeland, to leave it in search of work, to fail to complete the studies they have begun because of poverty. The university has always been a place of solidarity in this regard, and the efforts made have been called “brotherly help. The university by its very nature serves the future of man and society, therefore, in the spirit of this solidarity concern, it should “tirelessly and relentlessly” raise the issue of conditions for the education of young people (cfr. John Paul II, 1987a, 3).

The solidarity of the academic community is not about the minimum of justice, but about the optimum of love (Rodziński, 1988). This is possible when everyone in the academic community (regardless of their position) entrusts themselves to the service of the truth and the other person, entrusts themselves to the other without looking for their own benefits, and has the good of the other at heart. This is how *communio personarum* is born.

At the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, an example of such solidarity among academics *ad extra* was the establishment in 1994 of management studies for trade unionists at the bachelor’s and master’s levels. Thanks to this, during the transition period from a totalitarian to a democratic system in Poland, more than 1,500 trade unionists obtained a graduate degree in management. Later they became the intellectual elite

of the macrosystemic changes (e.g. by taking up prominent positions in trade union headquarters, as parliamentarians, managers in their primary workplaces, leaders of entrepreneurship and social integration). Many of them organized small or medium-sized companies in their local communities, providing jobs for people who had lost their jobs as a result of the “savage” privatization of their workplaces. In this way, solidarity activities spread through students and graduates to the wider social circles of the country (Biela, 2018, p. 362).

There are many examples of *ad intra* solidarity between academic staff and students in the history of the Catholic University of Lublin, e.g. reverend professors gave up their salaries for the benefit of poor students; the staff members supported those in need materially, psychologically or spiritually; the Rector of the Catholic University of Lublin, the Servant of God Wincenty Granat (1900-1979) risked his life to help students imprisoned by the communist authorities after student demonstrations; to honor the deceased student of the Catholic University of Lublin, Jacek Krawczyk, a foundation was established to support students in need and their families.

One can say that, just as Molière’s Mr. Jourdain (“The Bourgeois Gentleman”) did not know he was speaking in prose, so at the university where Karol Wojtyła was a professor, solidarity activities were undertaken for decades without realizing that they were implementing the program of “teaching through service”. Today, with full awareness of responsibility, students undertake such organizational, media, educational, rehabilitative, and caring activities for the benefit of their immediate environment as part of their internships, projects monitored by professors, and as volunteers. By helping others, they gain knowledge, new skills and competencies. Their involvement supports the UNISERVITATE program for institutionalization of service-learning (SL) as a tool to fulfil its mission of an integral education for social change and for a better society according to the social teaching of the Church.

### **3. Solidarity as understood by John Paul II and Service Learning pedagogy – common concepts**

Understanding of solidarity in the philosophical and anthropological currents, which highlights its ontological-personalistic and axiological-ethical dimensions, presented in the first part, sheds light on three aspects of solidarity, rooted in Karol Wojtyła’s personal, social, and ecclesial experience: the *personalistic norm*, the *theory of participation*, and the *common good*. These aspects can be traced in the major assumptions of Service Learning (SL) pedagogy.

Reference to Wojtyła's thought, in which the philosophical foundations of John Paul II's humanism can be found (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 65), is one of the challenges Pope Francis posed to the St. John Paul II Institute of Culture at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the saint's birth.

*The range of experiences that marked his life, especially the momentous historical events and the personal sufferings that he sought to interpret in the light of the Spirit, led Saint John Paul II to an even deeper reflection on man and his cultural roots as an essential reference point for every proclamation of the Gospel (Pope Francis, 2020).*

Wierzbicki notices that Wojtyła in the work quoted above, *The Person and Act*, which was and is interpreted by philosophers as a metaphysical text, indicates, as it were, a "shift towards a new paradigm of metaphysics – 'metaphysics of the person,'" which "does not undermine the ontological paradigm, but reveals the person as a distinguished form of being, irreducible to the world of nature due to subjectivity, awareness and freedom, transcending the world of his own products too" (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 66). A debate over this approach suggested by Wojtyła was participated in by, among others, G. Reale, R. Buttiglione, J. Seifert, J. Crosby, M. Burgos and U. Ferrer. Wojtyła himself reveals that the theological intuitions that inspired him came from, among others, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac and Luigi Giussani (cfr. Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 67).

Wojtyła noticed that the knowledge of who a person is can be achieved by examining human activity through an in-depth analysis of human activity. It is worth noting that, in such a mode of analyzing human activity, Wojtyła takes a different path than the one known for centuries and associated with the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas, who, in accordance with the procedure of classical philosophy, followed the basic formulation: *operare sequitur esse*, which should be read in the sense of *praxis sequitur theoriam* (Nowak, 2005, p. 11). This very path (*praxis sequitur theoriam*) from theory to practice – according to Wojtyła – is inevitable not only in ethics, but in all the sciences of action (medicine, technology,

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art, etc.), and therefore also in the sciences of education (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 136). While appreciating such a course of research, he asks the question: Is the direction leading from theory to praxis the only one in the search for the truth about man? He proposes to consider another

possibility, namely starting from praxis to arrive at theory, or, to put it another way, from *operari* to *esse*. In such an approach, knowledge of someone who is acting is shaped to a large extent through the experience and understanding of “that” – and of “how” – the subject works (Wojtyła 1969, p. 136; Rembierz, 2021, p. 141–142).

In the SL pedagogy, the foundation of which is human activity for the benefit of the needy and with them, Wojtyła’s reflection on the sense and meaning of human activity can enrich the theoretical foundations of the model of education in the educational institutions of the Catholic Church.

### 3.1. Service Learning – main principles

SL pedagogy is historically associated with the educational changes initiated by John Dewey (experiential learning) and some pedagogical trends of the second half of the 20th century, especially those advocated by Paulo Freire (critical pedagogy). SL is defined as *reflection and action taken to change reality; serving in solidarity with the use of teaching content; learning by serving the community* (Tapia, 2019, p. 489).

These basic principles make SL pedagogy similar to such pro-social activities as: (1) *field activities* aimed at applying specific school / university knowledge in the local environment, for example through periodic apprenticeships; (2) *non-systematic solidarity projects*, undertaken occasionally, which are not directly related to the acquired school or academic knowledge; (3) *institutional community service* through voluntary work or partnership projects (Tapia, 2006, pp. 45–49).

A characteristic feature that distinguishes SL from the above-mentioned forms of solidarity activities functioning in the area of formal and informal education is embedding them in education and formation programs. As M.N. Tapia puts it:

*“Collecting clothes and food for the injured is help. Studying architecture and designing plans is learning. Studying architecture, designing plans, and contributing to the construction of houses together with those in need is “learning by serving”* (Tapia, 2019, p. 489).

According to the approach presented by Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario (CLAYSS), the SL concept is based on three pillars: (1) solidarity in serving activities aimed at concrete and effective satisfaction of the real and pressing needs of a given community implemented together with the community; (2) active leadership of children and youth at all stages of these activities, from diagnosis through planning to

evaluation; (3) integral linkage of activities with the content and process of education or formation of a given educational institution or organization (Tapia, 2019, pp. 493–494; Rossa, 2016, p. 67). With regard to academic education:

*Service Learning is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into the curriculum and offers students' academic credit for the learning that derives from active participation within the community and work on a real-world problem. Reflection and experiential learning strategies underpin the learning process, and the service is linked to the academic discipline (Albanesi et al., 2021, p.12).*

### 3.2. The personalistic norm and serving in solidarity

The *personalistic norm*, the source of which is the dignity of the human being, was developed by Wojtyła based on his reflection on Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, which, in his opinion, laid the foundations for modern personalism in ethics (Jan Paweł II, 2005, pp. 44–46; Wojtyła, 1982, 1969).

This norm sets the foundation for a person's relationship with himself and others. It combines anthropology with ethics and, because it is closely related to the act of man, it can serve as an inspiration for the anthropological and axiological foundations of SL pedagogy.

Performing an act – in the light of the integral concept of a human being as a person – is understood by Wojtyła as realization of a conscious and free action of a person (*actus personae*) that brings an external and internal effect. However, he emphasizes that “conscious action” means not only the awareness of the action, but also indicates “the full dynamic entirety of an act performed by a person consciously” (Wojtyła, 1969, pp. 29–33). Such an action is closely related to “self-knowledge” – that is, the knowledge of one's own ‘self’ – and “experience”.

*Not only am I aware of my own 'self' - writes Wojtyła - but also, thanks to awareness, I experience this 'self', that is, I experience myself as a subject [...] Only in connection with action, that is, deed, does man live his morality and moral values. (1969, pp. 47–52).*

Man in his action, says Wojtyła, always chooses some good, which becomes the goal for this action. Therefore, he warns his readers:

*Whenever in your actions a person is a subject of these doings, remember that you cannot use this person merely to achieve your goal, as a tool. You should consider that this person has, or should have, their own goal, too (Wojtyła, 1982, p. 30).*

The positive content of this norm is: *a person is such a good that only love constitutes a proper and wholesome reference to him* (Wojtyła, 1982, p. 42). This love in its essence consists of affirmation of the person: *Persona est affirmanda propter seipsam* [The person is affirmed on its own] - the human person should be respected for himself, because he is a person, and not for any other reason (Styczeń, 1983, p. 70).

In the SL concept, this standard harmonizes with a clear distinction between *servicing* and *servicing in solidarity*. Common forms of help, the purpose of which is to serve, are characterized by: giving, acting “for” the needy, rather than egocentric selflessness focused on satisfaction, paternalism, clientelism, and transferring knowledge and advice from a dominant position. Service in solidarity, on the other hand, based on gratuitousness and selflessness, is aimed at creating fraternal ties that bind the giver and recipient, and therefore it is characterized by: reciprocity, mutualism, empathy, pro-social relations, fraternity, exchange and joint learning, as well as the search for truth and justice (Tapia, 2019, p. 495).

The basis of education in the SL pedagogy is *recognition of the equal dignity of every human person and fraternal bond* (Tapia, 2006, p. 89); therefore, it excludes any use of the other, the needy, as merely a means to achieve specific aims. Any support activities in which the pupil is involved in the SL education process is therefore not the aim in itself, resulting only from the willingness to serve the other. By the giver’s solidarity with the beneficiary, subjectivity is awakened, and the dynamics of reciprocity is activated. All this makes the personal and social reality change. In so understood service of solidarity, *everyone is both the giver and the receiver; some receive better living conditions, others experience and knowledge, but everyone enrich one another in a mutual gift of self* (Tapia, 2006, p. 89).

Servicing in solidarity appears as a form of social love. Wojtyła emphasizes, however, that in interpersonal relations “love is not something ready-made”, even if it is their principle or idea. If a man wants to break free from the utilitarian or consumption attitude toward other people, he must raise his behavior to the level of such love that makes him “ready to consciously seek good with others and submit to this good for the sake of others or submit to others for the sake of this good” (Wojtyła, 1982, pp. 31–32).

Indeed, man “cannot fully find himself except through the sincere gift of himself” (GS, 24).

### 3.3. Participation and youth leadership

The fulfillment of man depends on his attitude towards others and is best realized in action with others – *participation* that allows participation in a concrete existence of

others (Póltawski, 2005). The educational community cannot be reduced to classrooms and libraries but must progress continually towards participation. (Pope Francis, 2018; cf. Kozubek, 2020, p.29).

In the study entitled *Person and Act*, Wojtyła presents his theory of participation as acting “together with others”. *Participation* perceived by him as a property of the human being is expressed in two dimensions: as the ability of man to give a personalistic dimension to his actions and being together with other people, and as a positive relation to the humanity of other people expressed in their uniqueness. By participation, he states,

*“We mean [...] the reality that corresponds to the transcendence of a person in his action when this act is performed ‘together with others’, in various social or interpersonal relations” (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 294).*

In this sense, the concept of participation is linked with the concept of solidarity (Reale & Styczeń, in: Wojtyła, 2005, p. XCVI).

Participation, therefore, is a human disposition that causes man to assume the attitude of solidarity by undertaking cooperation with another, and thus participates in his humanity. The attitude of solidarity understood in this way:

*means a constant readiness to receive and carry out his or her part, because he or she is a member of a particular community. A man in solidarity not only does what belongs to him because of the membership of the community, but he does it ‘for the good of the whole’, that is, for the common good. The awareness of the common good makes him reach beyond the part that has been allocated to him (Wojtyła, 1969, pp. 311–312).*

*“In this subjective structure, the ‘you’ as the ‘second self’ represents its own transcendence and its own striving for self-fulfillment” (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 296).*

Apart from the attitude of solidarity in the community of action or existence, Wojtyła distinguishes an attitude of contradiction. *Both solidarity and contradiction acquire their proper meaning on the basis of a community of action or existence, and through its specific reference to the common good (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 310).* The contradiction is understood here *not as a negation of the common good and the need for participation, but as a confirmation of these two (Ibid, p.313).* In a community, the contradiction that arises on the basis of fundamental solidarity makes constructive implementation of the common good possible.

In a situation of the contradiction, what allows us to bring out what is true and right, leaving aside purely subjective attitudes or dispositions, which can be the source of tensions, conflicts and fights between people, is dialogue. The principle

of dialogue does not avoid difficulties, but *takes up what is true and right in communities, which can be a source of good for people* (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 314).

Development of the community of action and existence is therefore conditioned by the attitude of solidarity, contradiction and dialogue, thanks to which the one who acts matures in his humanity and contributes to it in others (Eckler-Nocoń, 2009, pp. 90–92).

In view of the above, it is possible to recognize the meaning and value of *youth leadership*, which is a feature of SL (Tapia, 2006, pp. 77–86; 2019, p. 494). In solidarity with the needy, starting from the stage of recognizing real needs, through planning specific activities, their implementation and evaluation, the young – in the process of maturing to conscious participation in social life – somewhat give birth to a community of givers and receivers. This capacity to participate in the humanity of each individual is at the heart of all participation.

*“Man, acting together with others, preserves everything that results from the community of action, and at the same time – precisely through this – realizes the personalistic value of his own act”* (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 322).

*“Participation is the property of an act, thanks to which a person participates in the good without limiting or humiliating his personal dignity, living and acting together with others, fulfilling himself as a person”* (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 95).

### 3.4. The common good and the integration of education with service in solidarity

Participation as a personal property is expressed in an attitude of solidarity. Through this attitude, man finds his fulfillment in completing others (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 314). Solidarity means that a person takes up the *common good* of the community in which he lives as his own and involves his whole self in its realization. The common good conditions and triggers participation. Each solidarity action of the young for the benefit of the needy generates a community. Wojtyła calls this type of community the ‘we’ social relationship. “We”, he claims, *are the multitude of individuals who act and live in relation to a single value that can be called the common good* (Ibid, p. 403). He emphasizes, however, that:

*“the common good is only the goal achieved in a community (...), but the common good is also and foremost what conditions and liberates participation in people acting together and thus shapes in them the subjective community of action”* (Ibid, p. 308).

*The common good must therefore be considered in the objective and subjective sense. What is at stake here is both the sum of goods for people and the good of people themselves. The extension of the teleological concept of the common good by the subjective dimension, taking into account the self-teleology of the person, conforms with the personalistic norm, which requires the affirmation of the person for himself, i.e. recognizing him as a goal and prohibiting treating the person only as a means (Wierzbicki, 2021, p. 95).*

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One of the most important issues raised by SL pedagogy is awakening the mentality of “opening out” in educational institutions by integrating curricula with activities of solidarity for the sake

of the common good. Studying becomes truly academic if the acquired knowledge is consolidated by applying it to activities for the benefit of the local community (Tapia, 2019, pp. 494–499). Pupils and students who can apply the knowledge gained in the process of education in solidarity activities to solve real problems of the local community not only contribute to the improvement of the situation of this community, but by maturing in the pro-social dimension, they are able to give a deeper meaning to the learning/studying process. By decentralizing themselves by discovering and caring for the common good, they strengthen their sense of self-esteem and subjectivity. *By acting ‘together with others’, a person performs an act and finds his/her fulfilment in it (Wojtyła, 1969, p. 295).*

The principles of SL, presented in the light of Wojtyła’s personalistic norm, his concept of participation and the common good, resonate with Pope Francis’ words of encouragement to the responsible and volunteers of FIDESCO:

*Your solidarity activities are truly aimed at the integral development of people, at caring not only for their material goods, but also for their social inclusion as well as intellectual, cultural and spiritual development, so that each of them retains their dignity (Pope Francis, 2021).*

In the apostolic constitution on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, *Veritatis Gaudium*, Pope Francis set out four main criteria for the renewal of Church universities: (1) the “*mystique*” of living together to “to give concrete expression to the social dimension of evangelization, the option for those who are least, those whom society discards”; (2) *dialogue* as “as an intrinsic requirement for experiencing in community the joy of the Truth” leading to a *culture of encounter*; (3) inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary

approaches carried out with wisdom and creativity in the light of Revelation; (4) “networking” between those institutions worldwide that cultivate and promote ecclesiastical studies in order to set up suitable channels of cooperation also with academic institutions in the different countries and with those inspired by different cultural and religious traditions (cfr. Pope Francis, 2017, VG, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d; Rossa, 2019, pp. 608–609).

The pedagogy of the SL becomes, therefore, a part of the direction of the reform of the Church’s academic education and research activities. The presented reflections on human activity based on the personalistic norm, participation in the community of existence and activities for the common good, expressed through the attitudes of solidarity, legitimate contradiction and dialogue, may shed new light on the still deepening theory of SL.

Pope Francis encourages us to extract prophetic intuitions from the wealth of John Paul II’s thoughts, which are not only still valuable and up to date, but require proper study, serious consideration and application in the current context (Pope Francis & Epicoco, 2020, pp. 92–93).

## Conclusion

Throughout his pontificate, John Paul II held over one hundred and fifty official meetings with representatives of universities and scientific associations from all over the world. He kept returning to the idea that at a true university there is solidarity among various scientific disciplines in service to man and in discovering ever more fully the truth about himself and

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the world around him. The university, however, is not only a place of discerning and passing on the truth, but also a place of forming man, fighting for man’s humanity, building bridges in order to multiply the good. Therefore, both “thinking ministry” and “ethical sensitivity” are necessary in the daily toil of every academic.

Thanks to the ethically sensitive ministry of thinking, the link between truth and good, which is essential for science, is preserved. Therefore: “*Being a scholar entails obligations!*” is the commitment to take special care of the development of one’s own humanity and

that of other human beings entrusted to the educational mission of all academics. This ministry of thought and service is the path to holiness (John Paul II, 1997, n. 5).

The direction of Catholic education for solidarity in serving, determined in this way, is complemented by Pope Francis who emphasizes:

*The Scriptures also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of “charity à la carte”, or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, n.180).*

Pope Francis, in the apostolic constitution on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, *Veritatis Gaudium* (Pope Francis, 2017, VG, n. 1–10), developed and updated the position on the role of Catholic universities in the mission of the Church today. He pointed out that Catholic universities should develop in their students: (1) an attitude of sensitivity towards the poor; (2) dialogue in all its fullness; and (3) the climate of inter- and trans-disciplinarity in reaching the truth about man and the world. These guidelines are for academic communion, the landmarks for the pillars of building university solidarity. Synthetically, the priorities of academic solidarity can be understood as the Pope’s call for the so-called option for the poor, for dialogue and for respect for human dignity and for the earth. At the same time, it means that Pope Francis creatively develops the concept of “solidarity” by reading the signs of the times in line with the thoughts of his predecessor, St. John Paul II.

We will now present a concrete proposal – “Solidarity with Graduates Employment Project” – to build academic solidarity within the university and solidarity of the academic community with the local communities of students from which these students will come. The subjects of this project are the BA and MA university students in their final year who believe they may have difficulties finding employment after completing their studies. The second group of participants of this project are teachers who will conduct two-semester classes during their year of study: *Preparation for the first work of X students* (where X denotes each individual study area at the university, i.e. psychology, archeology, preschool education, nursing, etc.).

The presented project has the following stages:

1. Development of the curriculum for the individual fields of study in the interdisciplinary team for the entire academic year.
2. Field studies in local communities of the students in order to determine the structure of the regional labour market.
3. Establishing local contacts to facilitate the employment of graduates.
4. Evaluation of the project's effects.

The “Solidarity with Graduates Employment Project” is intended to awaken solidarity within the university – between lecturers and final-year students who will soon become graduates and will face the problem of finding their first job. This kind of solidarity would undoubtedly build a common good, as it could significantly reduce the stress of graduates wandering alone in the radically more difficult environment, which is the labor market, compared to the familiar academic environment. The success of this project would not only facilitate a smoother transition for graduates from the world of university learning to the world of the labor market, but would also contribute to more effective work of these graduates. On the other hand, a beneficiary of this project would also be the university, which would thus greatly facilitate employment for its graduates. Other beneficiaries of this project would be the local communities from which the university students come, as their compatriots will return there as professionally employed citizens.

The main good commonality of this project is the prevention of long-term unemployment among university graduates. Unfortunately, the phenomenon of unemployment of university graduates in many countries has become very worrying. Solidarity with graduating students can prevent many misfortunes for young people often faced with unemployment or having to leave their homeland to go to work abroad.

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## 4. THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

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### Abstract

The Educational scenario in Asia particularly in India is complex. The present higher educational system focuses on quality, excellence, competition, responding to the job market. There is a struggle between the upper castes and lower castes concerning social concern and transformation of society. The social and religious agenda becomes political party oriented not people oriented. The social teachings and values of the church in Catholic Higher Education Institution (CHEIS) becomes antidote and an alternative expressing counter culture in favour of the poor. Vision and Mission of Catholic education is to teach the students to live, to discover the deeper meaning of life and of transcendence, to learn to interact with others, love creation, think freely and critically, find fulfilment in work, plan their future, or in one word to learn 'to be'. It is in and through education and service-learning that one can hope for a more human and humane future and a more harmonious society. To be unselfish in service and concerned for the welfare of the poor and oppressed, to become agents of social change in one's own situations. The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) has absorbed the social teachings of the Universal church and formulated

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the policy for the whole country in 2007. Catholic colleges form an integral part of Indian Higher Education. The Response of Catholic education and its social responsibility in influences the various social realities of the country, as will be shown in this chapter.

### Introduction

The chapter will have four parts: 1. The Church teaching, education and solidarity emphasizes that the Catholic teaching should lead to a process of education that can pave

the way towards the building of a community characterized by solidarity, brotherhood and fraternity. 2. The Indian experience responds to the serious and threatening situation of conflict at different levels leading to communal tension and violence which destroys the respect for human dignity and makes the community vulnerable and self-destructive. 3. The conclusion provides the service learning model taken from one of the leading Jesuit Institutions in South India which has worked out in practice to the students and staff to initiate the catholic social teaching as well as the social responsibility exhibited through praxis at the grass root level. 4. The bibliography refers to all the documents used and quoted in the text.

## 1. Church teachings, education and solidarity

A quick attempt is made in the first part of the paper to give a comprehensive picture of the Catholic Social teaching from the encyclicals documents of the Church and Papal teachings.

Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of our faith. Its roots are in the Hebrew prophets who announced God's special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice. It is a teaching founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came "to bring glad tidings to the poor (...) liberty to captives (...) recovery of sight to the blind"(Lk 4:18-19), and who identified himself with "the least of these," the hungry and the stranger (cf. Mt 25:45). Catholic social teaching is built on a commitment to the poor. This commitment arises from our experiences of Christ in the Eucharist.

Catholic social teaching emerges from the truth of what God has revealed to us about himself. We believe in the triune God whose very nature is communal and social. God the Father sends his only Son Jesus Christ and shares the Holy Spirit as his gift of love. God reveals himself to us as one who is not alone, but rather as one who is relational, one who is Trinity. Therefore, we who are made in God's image share this communal, social nature. We are called to reach out and to build relationships of love and justice.

Catholic social teaching is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. Every person, from the moment of conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity. Human dignity comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment. Our commitment to the Catholic social mission must be rooted in and strengthened by our spiritual lives. In our relationship with

God we experience the conversion of heart that is necessary to truly love one another as God has loved us.

Central to our identity as Catholics is that we are called to be leaven for transforming the world, agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we are praying for God’s kingdom of justice and peace and committing ourselves to breaking down the barriers that obstruct God’s kingdom of justice and peace and to working to bring about a world more respectful of human life and dignity.

The Church’s social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. It offers moral principles and coherent values that are badly needed in our time. In this time of widespread violence and diminished respect for human life and dignity around the world, the Gospel of life and the biblical call to justice need to be proclaimed and shared with new clarity, urgency, and energy. The main themes, challenges and orientations of Catholic Social Teaching are (USCCB, 2011):

*Call to Family, Community, and Participation:* in a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society, in economics and politics, in law and policy, directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The family is the central social institution that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. While our society often exalts individualism, the Catholic tradition teaches that human beings grow and achieve fulfilment in community. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Our Church teaches that the role of government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good.

*Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:* in a world characterized by growing prosperity for some and pervasive poverty for others, Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

*Solidarity:* our culture is tempted to turn inward, becoming indifferent and sometimes isolationist in the face of international responsibilities. Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning

*Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.*

to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world. This virtue is described by John Paul II as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each

individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 38).

*Care for God's Creation:* on a planet conflicted over environmental issues, the Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

This teaching is a complex and nuanced tradition with many other important elements. Principles like "subsidiarity" and the "common good" outline the advantages and limitations of markets, the responsibilities and limits of government, and the essential roles of voluntary associations. These and other key principles are outlined in greater detail in the Catechism. The above themes are built on the foundation of Catholic social teaching: the dignity of human life. This central Catholic principle requires that we measure every policy, every institution, and every action by whether it protects human life and enhances human dignity, especially for the poor and vulnerable.

These moral values and others outlined in various papal and Episcopal documents are part of a systematic moral framework and a precious intellectual heritage that we call Catholic social teaching. The Scriptures say, "Without a vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). As Catholics, we have an inspiring vision in our social teaching. In a world that hungers for a sense of meaning and moral direction, this teaching offers ethical criteria for action. In a society of rapid change and often confused moral values, this teaching offers consistent moral guidance for the future. For Catholics, this social teaching is a central part of our identity. In the words of John Paul II, it is "genuine doctrine" (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 5).

We believe the Church's social teaching is integral to our identity and mission as

Catholics. This is why we seek a renewed commitment to integrate and to share the riches of the Church's social teaching in Catholic education and formation at every level. This is one of the most urgent challenges for the new millennium. As John Paul II has said, "A commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee" (John Paul II, 1994, TMA, 51).

## The Renewal of Catholic Social Teaching in the Age of Pope Francis

Pope Francis has expressed a new sensitivity to the poor that no previous pope has been able to communicate. Given that he took his name from St Francis of Assisi, the first peacemaker, Father Massaro says this has come as no surprise: "his style is refreshing (...) He makes gestures that are very authentic and speaks with spontaneity (...) he visits homeless shelters, prisons and refugee camps and has a natural rapport with people of all kinds" (2019).

Fr Massaro (2019) also reviewed the nine principles of Catholic social teaching, and linked them to the teachings of Pope Francis: 1) Human Dignity and Rights, 2) Solidarity, Common Good, Participation, 3) Family Life, 4) Subsidiary and the Proper Role of Government, 5) Property Ownership: Rights and Responsibilities, 6) Dignity of Work, Rights of Workers, Support for Labor Unions, 7) Colonialism and Economic Development, 8) Peace and Disarmament, 9) Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. He added that globalization and the environment have also become areas of concern in recent years. Then reviewed six specific ways that Pope Francis has renewed Catholic social teaching over the past six years that coincide with the chapters in his book, *Mercy in Action* (2013):

1. *Economic justice – The dangers of economic inequality impact all societies around the world. Pope Francis believes in the need to redistribute wealth and speak out against unregulated markets that concentrate wealth at top. He also says that we have an obligation to remind billionaires to practice philanthropy.*
2. *Labor justice – The Church has been a good partner for the labor movement, supporting workers' rights around the world. Pope Francis has addressed labor leaders in this regard.*
3. *Environment – Pope Francis has been the 'green pope', promoting ecological justice and sustainability, and speaking out against climate change.*
4. *Family life – Pope Francis has recognized the challenges facing families and has addressed how the Church can offer support for families in distress, encouraging reconciliation instead of punishment.*
5. *Migrants – Pope Francis has been sensitive to the needs of the 90 million migrants, refugees and asylum seekers around the world and has made visits to refugee camps.*
6. *Agent of reconciliation – Pope Francis has continued the Church's long tradition of peace*

*advocacy, focusing on peace building and conflict transformation to reconcile all people. His actions are informed by Jesus, ‘Prince of Peace.’* (Massaro, 2019)

Father Massaro applauds Pope Francis for opening the door to new ways of looking at the Church’s stance on social justice issues; all the above items referred are pointers to service-learning and are different dimensions of social responsibility that applying to Catholic Higher Educational Institutions.

## **Pope Francis and the key themes of Catholic Social Teaching**

The encyclical *Laudato Si’* (Pope Francis, 2015) incorporates a number of the regular themes of Catholic Social Teaching including its promotion of solidarity, stewardship and the common good; preferential attention to the poor and preserving human dignity. The tradition—and this latest contribution to it—details the conditions of authentic human development and implores economic systems in service of people, not the other way around (Clarke, 2015).

A consistent theme in Catholic Social Teaching, solidarity is usually meant to suggest a mystical, merciful connection among all the world’s people that overcomes the separation of borders, class, language and faith. At times, especially regarding issues around the environment and sustainable economic development, it has been broadened to include the idea of an inter-generational solidarity that acknowledges this generation’s obligation to the next, that bequeaths to them a world at least as unspoiled and bountiful as the one it inherited. Pope Francis puts this concept to work in *Laudato Si’* (LS), the notion of the common good also extends to future generations: “The global economic crises have clearly demonstrated the baneful effects of disregard for our common destiny, which perforce includes those who come after us” (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 159). He adds,

*“We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others (...) Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.* (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 159).

But in *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis broadens the idea to promote a kind of planetary solidarity with the earth, its inhabitants and the whole of creation: “Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live” (LS, 139), he writes. Human beings have the responsibility to “‘till and keep’ the garden of the

world (cf. Gen 2:15)” (LS, 67), knowing that “the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward, with us and through us, towards a common point of arrival, which is God” (LS, 83).

For Catholics authentic development accepts the importance of sustainable systems, but extends toward a holistic understanding of the interaction of economies and the rights and dignity of people. Authentic development includes attending to the spiritual and material fulfillment of the primary focus of economic systems, the human person and his or her dignity and full self-expression. “Social love is the key to authentic development,” Pope Francis says in paragraph 231, adding in a quote from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace,

*In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life—political, economic and cultural—must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity (...) social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a ‘culture of care’ which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us (LS, 231).*

*Laudato Si’* often puts standard themes of Catholic Social Teaching to novel use. It argues for a judicious, sustainable use of the world’s resources, not just because that best responds to the crisis of climate change, but because care of creation itself acts as an expression of solidarity with the poor in the developing world. This is a key interweaving that Francis consistently employs, in this instance refuting the suggestion that good environmental stewardship and protecting the human dignity of the world’s poor create clashing interests. Francis argues that this is a false trade-off, that the global poor are materially harmed by the degradation of the planet and protected in conjunction with care of creation. Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes. He writes,

*‘which cannot be separated and treated individually ...’ Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 92).*

Francis demonstrates the interconnectedness of both the problem addressed by *Laudato Si’* and a hoped-for cure—a conversion of heart and practice. In 158, he writes,

*In the present state of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the*

*principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods... it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 158).*

Having developed the main themes of Catholic social teaching in *Laudato Si'* we will now reflect on the role of Catholic higher education institutions and their contribution to solidarity building. The Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities (*Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 1990) develops a number of characteristics which should identify Catholic institutions of higher education and which are presented in summary below.

*Nature and Objectives:* every Catholic University, as a university, is an academic community which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching and various services offered to the local, national and international communities. It possesses that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* affirms:

*Since the objective of a Catholic University is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture (16), every Catholic University, as Catholic, must have the following essential characteristics: 1. a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university Community as such; 2. a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research; 3. fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church; 4. an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life. (John Paul II, 1990, ECE, 13)*

*The mission of service of a catholic university:* the basic mission of a University is a continuous quest for truth through its research, and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society. A Catholic University participates in this mission with its own specific characteristics and purposes.

*Service to Church and Society:* through teaching and research, a Catholic University offers an indispensable contribution to the Church. In fact, it prepares men and women who, inspired by Christian principles and helped to live their Christian vocation in a mature and responsible manner, will be able to assume positions of responsibility in the Church. Moreover, by offering the results of its scientific research, a Catholic University will be able to help the Church respond to the problems and needs of this age.

A Catholic University, as any University, is immersed in human society; as an extension of its service to the Church, and always within its proper competence, it is called on to become an ever more effective instrument of cultural progress for individuals as well as for society. Included among its research activities, therefore, will be a study of *serious contemporary problems* in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political

*University research will seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions. If need be, a Catholic University must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.*

stability, a more just sharing in the world's resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level. University research will seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions. If need be, a

Catholic University must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.

*Cultural Dialogue:* by its very nature, a University develops culture through its research, helps to transmit the local culture to each succeeding generation through its teaching, and assists cultural activities through its educational services. It is open to all human experience and is ready to dialogue with and learn from any culture. A Catholic University shares in this, offering the rich experience of the Church's own culture. In addition, a Catholic University, aware that human culture is open to Revelation and transcendence, is also a primary and privileged place for a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture. What the Pope says about Catholic University is very much applicable to Catholic Higher Educational Institutions all over the world. Pope Francis alludes to the need for the Church and Catholic institutions of higher education to go out to the peripheries, understanding society as a polyhedron:

*The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all forms of misery (Bergoglio, 9 March 2013).*

*(...) Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. Pastoral and political activity alike seek to gather in this polyhedron the best of each. There is a place for the poor and their culture, their aspirations and their potential. Even people who can be considered dubious on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked. It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 236).*

## 2. The Indian experience

After a description of the Catholic social teachings we come to this local situation in India about service-learning and its contribution by Catholic Higher Education Institutions to their identity and mission.

### *All India Catholic Education Policy*

In 2007 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) clearly articulated the education policy in the country, highlighting the importance of the Social Doctrine of the Church in responding to global issues and challenges in the local situation and context.

This policy document was enthusiastically welcomed and unanimously approved by the CBCI Standing Committee in its meeting of 26th April 2007 in view of its promulgation by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. This Catholic Education Policy is of the whole Church in India and meant for the entire Catholic Community.

Catholic Education Policy seeks to clarify and stress the essential mission of Catholic education in India today. For this, it mainly draws inspiration and substance from the documents of the Congregation for Catholic Education, the statements of the General Assemblies of the CBCI, and specifically the CBCI mandate of February 2006 to evolve

an Education Policy that focuses on providing quality and relevant education to the marginalized, especially the children of our *Dalit* (Dalit refers to lower caste) and *Tribal* (Tribal refers to native people particularly in Chota Nagpur) brothers and sisters.

*The aim of the policy:* the policy highlights our duty to give serious attention to and deepen the authentic **spiritual formation** of all our students and **nurture the faith culture** of Christian believers. It also broadens the narrow focus on personal academic development and emphasizes the holistic and fuller development that meets the challenge of modern culture and society, and its demand for higher levels of competence.

The policy advocates the equally essential social and **societal transformation and responsibility**, as a major goal and mission of our education. Being Christian is essentially an invitation to become a person of faith, hope and love. It is a summons to form *communities of solidarity, and of justice and equality*, at the service of all people, especially the poor and the marginalized. As the CBCI proclaimed in 2000, we are committed to “**a new society built on justice, peace**, love and harmony: a civilization of love. And we share our hope with all our brothers and sisters” (2.VII).

A key focus area in this policy is on the need for our Catholic institutions to contribute actively to the betterment of India and its people, by sharing in **nation building**. Developing micro models of communities of solidarity across the many borders that presently divide us—like caste and creed and culture—and make us less human is therefore a major objective of the policy. Jesus showed us the way by proclaiming the Kingdom of God on earth by breaking down age-old barriers of mind and heart, and all types of exclusion and discrimination. In our apostolate of education, our goal, both as individual institutions and as members of corporate bodies (the diocese/religious congregation/Church in India), is to build *inclusive human communities*.

Our educational mission, in the context of India today and the India of tomorrow, is the *re-creation of human lives, communities and the wider society*. In the past, there have been many Christian contributions to the society in India. Our present challenge is to build a New Society, to make another India possible, in collaboration with all people of goodwill and their institutions and organizations. At this critical juncture, all must work unitedly with the marginalized to build up a better future for our country. Education has to enable the millions who have no name or face or dignity and whom society treats as non-persons, to regain their dignity and self-worth. The spirituality of communion and service that energized Jesus and gave His life colour, energy and direction, urges us to wholeheartedly dedicate ourselves to this mission.

The Contexts and Challenges for this policy:

*Education is the key to empowering the marginalized so that they can enjoy their God-given dignity (...) As Church, in imitation of Jesus who made a preferential option for the poor, we commit ourselves to focus particularly on the marginalized in order to enable them to take their rightful place in the life of the country and their contribution to the progress of the nation (CBCI, 2006, pp. 7-8).*

*Our institutional services must cater increasingly to the poor and there must be reservations both in admission and in employment for the Dalits and Tribals (CBCI, 1998, 5.6).*

*The International Context:* in our knowledge-intensive and technology-driven world, where possession of appropriate competences is absolutely necessary, the majority of the nations and their peoples have become marginalized. It has resulted in the *present international social order that is extremely unjust*, since it has created a very unequal world society, with a very large degree of exclusion and consequent marginalization. Side by side with great progress, we also witness today massive poverty, inequalities and injustices in many fields of life. Fortunately, in the meanwhile, human aspirations for *equality* and *participation*, for human dignity and freedom have also grown in great measure.

*The Indian Scenario:* within our country, we mirror in many ways the above-described international situation and conditions. Here too we notice an affluent minority, along with a growing middle class with high aspirations, and a significant percentage of the remaining 30-40% or more who are poor, many of them very poor. These are the ones who have been marginalized in varying degrees and who suffer from many kinds of deprivations. While we have an abundance of relevant policies, legislations and schemes to remedy these inequalities, practical actions to implement them have been few and have remained largely ineffective. Hence in spite of these policies and the clear guidelines of our Constitution, even the basic rights of the common people, such as education, health care, housing and basic rural infrastructure remain unfulfilled. Decisions favouring the big industries within the country and the multi-national companies from overseas, have resulted in a great deal of displacement of tribal communities and in the forced migration of the rural people to the cities in search of livelihood and the hope of better living conditions, who often find themselves in worse situations. As in the global context, in India too money and market are emerging as the sole points of reference for the maximization of profits, forcing every other consideration and value to yield to the demands of economic growth and the progress of a small minority. The local situation in India is ridden with Caste and Communalism: "Discrimination against anybody on the basis of caste is a sin against God and humanity" (CBCI, 1998, 4.2).

Another crucial challenge is the growing assertion of ethnic, regional, cultural and religious identities. There is more and more intolerance, various forms of communalism, tensions and divisions and even violence as a result. A call to mutual understanding and warm collaboration is timely.

*The Educational Context:* in today's context, relevant education is an essential resource for life and living. *The presence or absence of this critical resource is a basic divider of our Indian society today.* India had the distinction of having the insight that it is knowledge that liberates us (*gyana marga mukti marga – way through meditation is the way to salvation*). But knowledge had remained the prerogative of a few in ancient Indian societies. The unavailability of this essential resource, namely, a good 'quality education', continues to deprive the poor of availing of the many opportunities in life even today. As a consequence, a significant third of our population is sidelined and marginalized, while there is such an over-abundance of both knowledge and affluence with the few rich and the powerful in India.

In spite of significant progress since Independence, the educational situation in India remains rather dismal even today. In 2001, India had about one third of the world's illiterates — almost 46% and 35% of its female and overall population in the 7+ age group respectively, that is 296.2 million persons. Less than 11% of students enrolled in grade-one pass a Public Examination. More than 80% who fail in a Board Examination fail in Mathematics and Science (CBCI, 2007, p.7).

*The Church's Concern for the Marginalized:* the Church sees education as an agent of transformation not of the individual person only but also of society. That is the critical reason why the Church has initiated this new policy of education as an effective instrument for the transformation of our unequal society. The basic cause for the continuing gross inequality in India is the very low level of educational attainments among a large percentage of our priority groups, namely *Dalits* (Dalit refers to lower caste), *Tribals* (Tribals refers to native people), women, and the deprived categories of the *OBCs* (Other Backward Castes).

It is in a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multilingual context that the Catholic educational institutions in our country have been imparting education, and thus serving all communities.

## **Vision, Mission and Goals of Catholic Education**

The goal of education is to teach the students to live, to discover the deeper meaning of life and of transcendence, to learn to interact with others, love creation, think freely and

critically, find fulfilment in work, plan their future, or in one word, to learn 'to be'. It is in and through education that one can hope for a more human and humane future and a more harmonious society.

*Special efforts should be made to enable students: (1) to think for themselves independently and critically; (2) to seek, extend and apply knowledge to the solution of human problems; (3) to continually strive after excellence in every field; (4) to become mature, spiritually aware men and women of character; (5) to value and judiciously use their freedom, combining with it a full sense of responsibility for actions; (6) to be clear and firm on principles and courageous in action; (7) to be unselfish in the service of their fellowmen and concerned for the welfare of the poor and socially oppressed; and (8) to become agents of needed social change in their own situations. (All India Association of Christian Higher Education, New Delhi, Declaration of Purpose, 1982).*

*Education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit – thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution (Government of India. National Policy on Education, 1986, 2.2)*

An Education that *humanizes and contextualizes*, by assisting the students to raise essential questions concerning the *meaning of life* and of their role in society, enabling them to become conscious of their responsibility to contribute to evolving a borderless society and to promoting the common good.

An Education that thus forms the young to evolve as men and women of *character, competence, conscience, compassion and commitment*, who will then contribute to the evolution of a *counter-culture* to the present ruthlessly competitive model, by promoting *collaboration and cooperation for the growth of all*, in a climate of mutual trust and sharing; and to the shockingly corrupt society, by fostering *uprightness in public life*.

We assume the responsibility for the education of the poor and the marginalized in our institutions, as an essential part of our contribution to build an inclusive and just society. In our Indian context the marginalized would include the *Dalits, Tribals, rural poor, slum dwellers, migrants, child labourers, un-organized labour*, etc. We make available to them well-qualified teachers, who understand their culture and background and are committed to them. By becoming self-empowered, they will then contribute to build a just, humane and democratic India.

*Integral Personal Development of all Students*: our objective is that our students become men and women of high levels of personal competence, conscience, compassion

and commitment. We realize that bringing this about through personalized accompaniment demands great dedication and selflessness on the part of all the stakeholders.

## **Service-learning: social sensitisation for societal transformation**

Service learning is the means to reach out to the poor and also learning with sensitivity and compassion to serve the downtrodden. This learning is done in the CHEIS.

As a major contribution to build a new India and a new ethos, we plan and execute a good programme of social sensitisation of the students, an awareness and action programme to make them understand and become sensitive to the major social issues and inherited inequalities. Systematically done, as a part of a national campaign by our institutions, through a well-designed curriculum and experiential learning, it will empower our students “to create a society inspired by the Gospel values of service in love, peace rooted in justice, and fellowship based on equality” (CBCI, 2006, 2). We see this as our major contribution to develop a new culture and to build a New India (*Bharat Navanirman* – Rebuilding India anew) and a very relevant constituent of genuine education.

Education for Social Transformation entails a proper understanding of the dynamic functioning of society: the economic, political and social structures, the meaning systems (culture, religion, and ideology), their manifold and complex relationships, as well as the factors or laws of societal evolution. It also demands the acquisition of a purposeful vision for the future and the identification of effective means and strategies for social change. And most importantly, Christian students are made aware of the social teachings of the Church, especially those of the CBCI.

In addition, we identify and provide several opportunities to students while in school and even more in college to move into practical social action (service-learning) and so empower them to become stakeholders and enlightened leaders of future India, “who will be able to play a critical role in society and contribute to solve its economic, social and spiritual problems.” (CBCI, 1974, 48).

*Our Contribution Through Higher Education:* the most important indicator of a country’s progress is the state of its higher education. If all is well with the Universities, all would be well with the nation also. Higher Education does not merely pass on the heritage of the accumulated knowledge of the past but also creates new knowledge, and using technology makes numerous applications to enhance the quality of life and living. Since it is knowledge that is transforming the world, tertiary education has a major responsibility to contribute to the design and directions that the society will adopt.

Catholic colleges form an integral part of Indian Higher Education. In the present situation, Catholic colleges are faced more than ever before, with the challenge of providing leadership of thought and theories for taking the nation forward. Hence, it is not enough for them to be islands of excellence. By inserting themselves into the national mainstream of issues and concerns, they then become agents of change, and contribute to enhance the quality of life.

*Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. It is therefore a crucial factor for survival (Government of India. National Policy on Education, 1986, 5. 24).*

We have always laid special stress on values. Today there seems to be a serious crisis of values due to rapid changes in society. This has resulted in a good measure of confusion and value disorientation. Youth will therefore need to be provided space and time for value clarification. As part of society, college students cannot but be influenced by the rapid changes that are taking place. Whether students, staff, parents, priests or religious, they all are confronted by this value erosion. Mature discussion, within a democratic frame, would enable our youth and staff to examine major societal issues, like the environment, status of women, human rights, consumerism, corruption, work ethic, questions of peace and social harmony. Development and freedom are linked. Our colleges provide the ambience for humanizing education, within the diverse cultural contexts of our country. In terms of policy thrust and decision, we envisage the following:

- a) Equip young people to become honest citizens who are rooted in their culture, open to other cultures, and are capable of interpreting social processes, so as to take responsibility for bringing about transformation in society.
- b) Our institutions while remaining inclusive, reproducing a mini-India on the campus, will have a clear option for Catholics, for the poor and the marginalized.
- c) Re-organise courses and programmes to respond to the changed needs of the times.
- d) Promote research and publications in social and scientific fields and also in learning theories and technologies, since in our knowledge society, generation of new knowledge holds the key to progress and development.
- e) Network with other tertiary institutions and Universities for mutual exchange and enrichment.

- f) Focus on leadership development in various fields so that our students make significant contribution to the progress of the nation and its peoples.
- g) Accompany youth in the contexts of today in their pilgrimage of faith on issues of transcendence, which give meaning to life.

*The contribution of the Indian Catholic Church in the field of Education 2007: an Educational Institution that is established and administered by the Diocese, Religious Congregation or a Catholic lay person or organization to impart education based on the Gospel values and the ‘All India Catholic Education Policy’, is a Catholic Educational Institution. Our Mission is to enable students (CBCI, 2018):*

*To think for themselves independently and critically. To seek, extend and apply knowledge to solve human problems. To continually strive after excellence in every field. To become mature and spiritually aware persons of character and conviction. To value and judiciously use freedom with a full sense of responsibility. To be clear and firm on principles and courageous in action. To be unselfish in service and concerned for the welfare of the poor and oppressed. To become agents of social change in one’s own situations.*

The following figure summarizes the main features of Catholic education in India:

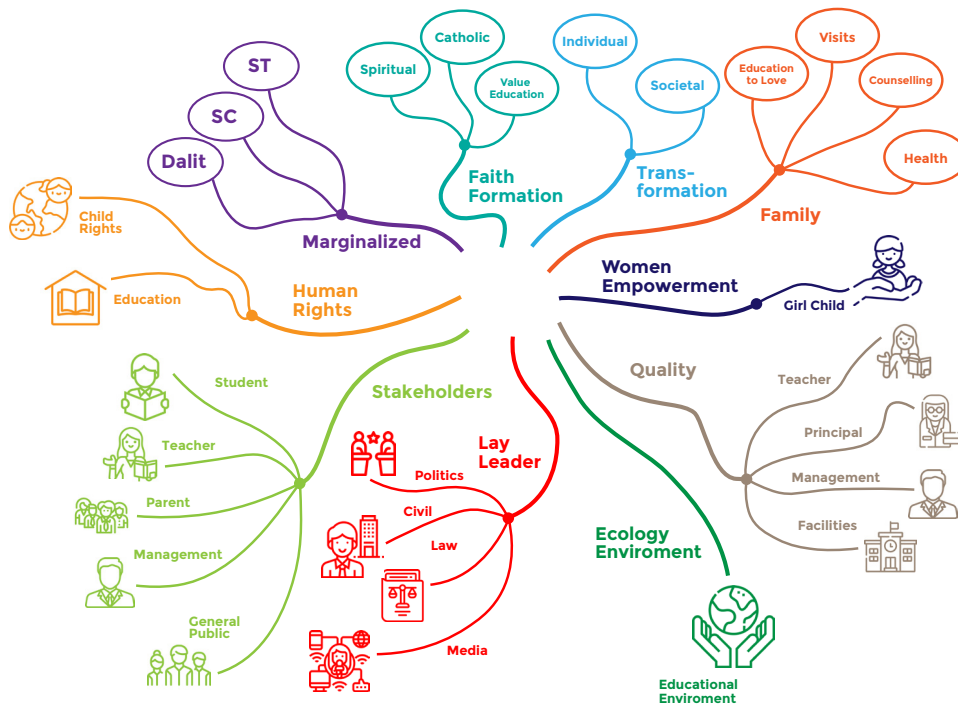


FIGURE 1: The salient features of the “All India Catholic Education Policy 2007” (CBCI, 2007)

## The Practice of Social Teaching - A model of Service Learning

The Jesuit vision of higher education has never been simplistic or one-sided. It is about holistic development with a special focus on critical praxis that engages students in linking their academic excellence, character development and personal concern to the transformation of a society deeply troubled by inequality and injustice. The student who passes through Jesuit higher education cannot remain isolated from the economic, political and cultural fabric of his or her society. It is an integral part of higher education that he/she becomes aware of and involved in the everyday realities of society. The Jesuit ideal is that solidarity with the people can only be achieved through “contact” and “participation” in the daily life of the marginalized. It is therefore the firm conviction of Jesuit Higher Education that “personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice that others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual enquiry and moral reflections”.

The Outreach programme is the extension programme of the Catholic Higher Education Institutions reaching out the slums, villages, migrants, refugees and places where people need help and succour. It could be regular on timely responding to Tsunami, COVID and other natural disasters.

The Outreach program draws its inspiration from the St. Joseph’s College vision of forming women and men for others (Bangalore, Karnataka, 2021). It provide students with a platform to explore and develop the art of critical thinking, the skill of leadership and techniques of meaningful interventions aimed at building a just equitable society. It further draws its roots from the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s Philosophy of Action – Reflection – Praxis (Freire, 1996).

It will orient the students with the skills required in community development and would sensitize them towards various issues of these marginalized groups and instill enough confidence and satisfaction for taking up the cause of the development of those groups.

The Programme aims to reach out the deprived groups and vulnerable sections of society and create opportunities for education, awareness and skill enhancement. It intend to create a learning process for faculty and students through exposure to community needs, problems, and issues. It hopes to reach out to the community by designing need based interventions and generating research.

Eventually it will facilitate networking and linkages of the community with NGOs, institutions, and government agencies for the effective service delivery and advocacy support. It also hopes to link up with the corporate sector within the parameters of

Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR). This model is being successfully applied by many of the Catholic institutions of higher education in India and has provided a model for the Government of India.

### *The Structure and Process*

*There are two stages in the outreach Program*

1. *The Preparation Stage:* in this stage students will be equipped with the required knowledge, through classes, talks and documentaries. In this process students will be able to identify students leaders and the leaders will also undergo a special training to lead the class for the outreach activity.
2. *The practical Stage:* in this stage, the actual out - reach begins and there will be a continuous evaluation, assessment of the experiences in the programme and on growing formation talks.

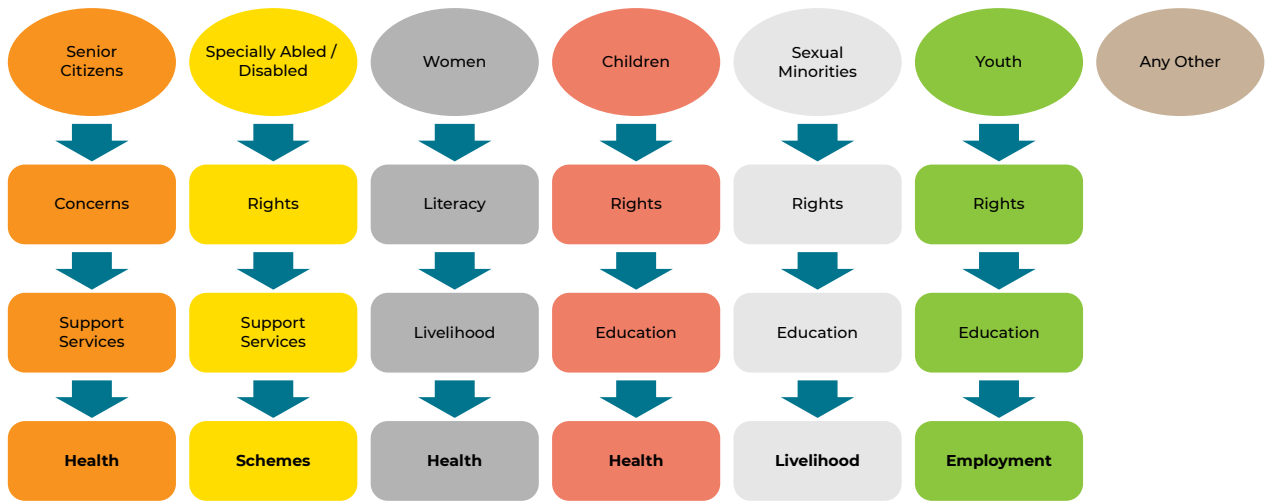
The Catholic Higher educational Institutions in India have absorbed and assimilated the social teachings of the church at the global and national levels. They have integrated them into their curriculum through service-learning to all the students. They have also evolved a few models of reaching out to the people especially the poor and marginalized. They have also included the same in their comprehensive evaluation and assessment of the students to confer their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. I am happy to give below one such model:

TABLE 2: St. Joseph's College, outline of practical stage (Bangalore, Karnataka, 2021)

<i>Under graduate level</i>		<i>Posgraduate level</i>	
Task 1	Field visits	30 Hours	16 Hours
Task 2	Rural Exposure	4 Days	4 Days
Task 3	Documentation	5 Hours	2 Hours
Task 4	Public Events	5 Hours	2 Hours

The following chart describes the Programme's areas of work and their complexity. It outlines key dimensions of the service-learning programme and its implementation in a Catholic Higher Education Institution.

TABLE 2: St. Joseph's College, outline of practical stage (Bangalore, Karnataka, 2021)



The Service Learning Programme has different names like Science and Humanities for People's Development (SHEPHERD), Loyola Extension and Awareness Programme (LEAP), Student Training and Action for Neighbourhood Development (STAND), Rural Action Development and Research (RADAR).

### 3. Conclusion

The service-learning model creates awareness, sensitizes the students and helps them to build a just society. The entire theory and practical of service learning practised in India is based on the global perspective of the social teaching of the Church, the recent insights

*The model of service-learning is emerging in India, during the last 30 years. The model has to be designed according to the different cultural and social situations of India without sacrificing the social teachings and social responsibility of the Catholic Church. The model is learning adapted by service minded groups of all religions to promote harmony and national integration.*

of Pope Francis, the encyclical of Pope John Paul II (Ex-Corde Ecclesiae) the educational policy formulated by the CBCI (2007).

The model of service-learning is emerging in India, during the last 30 years. The model has to be designed according to the different cultural and social situations of India without sacrificing the social teachings and social responsibility of the Catholic Church. The model is learning adapted by service minded groups of all religions to promote harmony and national integration.

The Indian experience elaborated sums up the Catholic social teaching and the social responsibility of the Catholic Higher Education Institutions. This model of service-learning demonstrates the choice of the Catholic Higher Education Institutions to involve themselves into the community thus building a community of care and compassion.

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## 5. EDUCATING TO THE SPIRIT OF FRATELLI TUTTI THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*Fratelli Tutti* is the third encyclical of Pope Francis on fraternity and social friendship. In this encyclical, the Pope invites 'all brothers and sisters' to an improved global cooperation, human fraternity, and universal solidarity. How can this noble philosophy trickle down to the younger generation? The document proposes education and formation of young people. The objective of this chapter is to explore the potential of service learning in building the spirit of *Fratelli Tutti* among learners in institutions of higher learning. This aim is realised in five major sections of the chapter.

The first section of the chapter presents an overview of the basic tenets of *Fratelli Tutti*. It offers a summary which is a synthesis of the eight chapters of the document. The second section reflects on those parts of *Fratelli Tutti* that refer to education and formation of young people. In order to achieve the goals of education as envisaged by *Fratelli Tutti*, the third section of the chapter proposes service learning as an effective methodology.

Writing from Africa, in the following section, we contextualise the concept of solidarity within the framework of the African social philosophy of *Ubuntu* – I am because we are! The fifth section of the chapter narrates a concrete experience of service learning in the African context that demonstrates the possibility of achieving the spirit of 'gratuitousness' among the learners. We conclude by linking our reflection to the vision of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as proposed by UNESCO in its pillar: 'Learning to live together'.

### Introduction

On 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019, during the Papal visit to the United Arab Emirates, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahamad al-Tayyib signed a declaration entitled 'Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.' The document called for fraternity among nations, religions and races. It also expressed the resolve to work together to fight extremism

among religions. This watershed event worked as a backdrop for Pope Francis to publish on 3 October 2020, his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*.

*Fratelli Tutti (FT)* is the third encyclical of Pope Francis, in which he invites all brothers and sisters to an improved global cooperation, human fraternity, and universal solidarity. Thus, the document goes beyond dialogue among religions to a global agenda of establishing fraternity among all peoples. Education and formation play an important role in the implementation of the spirit of *FT*. Focusing on higher education, in this chapter, we ask, how can the noble philosophy of *FT* trickle down to the younger generation? The primary objective of this chapter is to explore the potential of service learning in building the spirit of *FT* among learners in institutions of higher learning. This objective is further enhanced by reflecting on service learning in relation to *FT* within the framework of *Ubuntu* philosophy emerging from the African context. We also intend to present a concrete experience of service learning and relate it to the primary objective of the chapter. This chapter is developed in five sections and a conclusion.

The first section presents an overview of *FT*. It offers a concise summary of the eight chapters in a sequential manner. The second section of the chapter reflects on those parts of *FT* that refer to education and formation of young people. It is the formation of young people that will build the spirit of *FT* in the next generation. Specifically, education is seen by *FT* as the task of cultivating or building fraternity, dialogue, solidarity, and integration. In order to achieve these goals of education as envisaged by *FT*, the third section of the chapter proposes service learning as an evidence-based methodology. In this section, service learning is defined and expounded from the perspective of social transformation aimed at fraternity and solidarity.

Writing from the African context, in the fourth section, we make a specific contribution to the conversation on the service learning, by contextualising the concept of solidarity within the framework of the African social philosophy of *Ubuntu* and pointing out to its possible relationship with service learning! The fifth section of the chapter narrates a concrete experience of service learning as implemented in a course of 'Ministering to People with Disabilities' at a university college in Kenya that demonstrates the possibility of achieving the spirit of 'gratuitousness' and *Ubuntu* among the learners as envisaged by *FT* through service learning. We conclude by linking our discussion to the UNESCO document, "*Learning: The Treasure Within – Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*" (Delors, 1996), which includes 'learning to live together' as one of the pillars of education. We suggest that service learning provides the methodology for young people to learn to live together in the spirit of fraternal, friendship, solidarity and *Ubuntu*.

## Fratelli Tutti: A Bird's-Eye View

*Fratelli Tutti* is a strategic and consistent expression of the agenda of Pope Francis in “rebuilding the Church” (Hastings, 2019) and in enhancing the world and the rest of creation in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi. Just as ‘*Laudato Si*’, the title of the encyclical of Pope Francis on the care of our common home, was borrowed from St Francis, and which reflected the spirit of the saint in his closeness to creation, ‘*Fratelli Tutti*,’ another borrowed expression from St Francis, echoes the saint’s dedication to world-peace and unity among religions. In 1219, even as the Fifth Crusade was raging, Saint Francis travelled to the Middle East to meet Sultan Malik Al Kâmil, the nephew of Saladin. It is this spirit of reaching out that transcends all geographical and racial barriers that the encyclical by Pope Francis now reiterates.

In the course of eight chapters and 287 articles, *FT* invites all brothers and sisters to fraternal love with an aim of forming a single human family. The first chapter of the document begins by pointing out the “dark clouds” that threaten the collective communion in the globalised world. Among them is the increasing tension between attempts at greater integration of nations as in the formation of continental blocks and at the same time forces that desire isolation with their narrow aim of asserting their unique identities. Then there is the growing loss of the sense of history whereby people desire, as it were, to start everything from zero. In a use-and-throw society that we live in there is an emerging utilitarian attitude in relationships, that threatens the dignity of the human person.

In Chapter 2, the document goes on to present the Parable of the Good Samaritan as the framework for our reflection and action on

*the social meaning of existence, the fraternal dimension of spirituality, our conviction of the inalienable dignity of each person, and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters* (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 86).

The heart of Pope Francis, as expressed in the encyclical, goes out to the migrants (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 41), victims of religious fanaticism (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 46), and all vulnerable members of the society (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 64).

In the spirit of discernment, which is typical of his Pontificate, Pope Francis proposes a manifesto for a new world order that is marked by open societies that integrate everyone, built on liberty, equality, and fraternity (chapter 3). He envisages a universal horizon that goes beyond “*local narcissism*” (chapter 4), and a new and better politics grounded on the common good (chapter 5). His dream for the world is that “*social friendship*” becomes the hallmark of every city and country (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 99). Throughout these sections, Pope Francis is heavily

critical of some of the contemporary ideologies and practices, such as, the absolutisation of right to private property (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 120), market economy that is encouraged by “the dogma of neoliberal faith” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 168), and the extreme solutions offered in war and death penalty (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 255-270; see also, Sniegocki, 2021).

The Pope goes on to offer meaningful alternatives to these contemporary ideologies in values and practices such as dialogue, consensus and kindness (chapter 6), and the process of renewed encounter expressed in forgiveness and reconciliation (chapter 7). Dialogue situates itself between “feverish exchange of opinions” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 200) which are mere monologues and an irresponsible tolerance of all opinions that leads to relativism. “Authentic social dialogue involves the ability to respect the other’s point of view...” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 203) and allowing individuals and communities to defend their values and convictions. This will surely benefit the society. In its proposals, *FT* is realistic and concrete. Speaking of forgiveness, the Pope points out, “Forgiveness is precisely what enables us to pursue justice without falling into a spiral of revenge or injustice of forgetting” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 252).

The Pope concludes the encyclical (chapter 8) by reiterating the responsibility of “religions at their service of fraternity in our world,” as the title of the chapter indicates. Pope Francis repeats here what he said in his address to the civil authorities at Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2015:

*Religious convictions about the sacred meaning of human life permit us ‘to recognize the fundamental values of our common humanity, values in the name of which we can and must cooperate, build and dialogue, pardon and grow; this will allow different voices to unite in creating a melody of sublime nobility and beauty, instead of fanatical cries of hatred’* (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 283).

Throughout the work, the Pope’s invitation to all people of good will is to go beyond words to concrete expression of reaching out to others in the spirit of the Good Samaritan.

## Education to the Spirit of Fratelli Tutti

As summarised in the above section, *FT* offers a programme for building global solidarity in the contemporary world by inviting religions, nations, and cultural institutions to a spirit of fraternity and social friendship. In order to achieve this agenda, there is a need for education of people, especially those who are young. Therefore, in this chapter contribution, we ask: what type of education is needed for fraternity and social friendship? To begin with, in this section of the chapter, we focus on the question: what does *FT* itself say about education?

Surprisingly, there is no precise section on education in the document. However, concepts related to education run through the whole document. Different terms are used in reference to education. Terms such as ‘cultivating’ (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 94, 243), ‘forming’ (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 229), and ‘building’ (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 227, 233) are punctuated throughout the document, in addition to the word ‘education’ itself which is used eleven times in the document. These terminologies are employed in relation to growth in fraternity, dialogue, solidarity, and cultural, economic and political integration.

To begin with, Pope Francis reiterates that fraternity does not come about in a society just by chance. It has to be consciously cultivated through formal education, dialogue, and recognition of values of reciprocity and mutual enrichment (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 103). In a similar vein, speaking about cultivating dialogue, Chapter 7 of the document points out:

*What is important is to create processes of encounter, processes that build a people that can accept differences. Let us arm our children with the weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter!* (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 217)

Another aspect of education envisaged by *FT* consists in cultivating solidarity. Solidarity is the product of personal conversion, the document contends, which could be achieved by means of education and formation. It goes on to point out that the process of formation to solidarity must begin at the level of the family. As children grow to be adolescents and young adults the responsibility of learning to live together shifts to institutions of formal education without replacing that of the family. And throughout every stage of growth, the media plays a deep responsibility towards the formation to solidarity (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 114).

Pope Francis also considers the cultivation of cultural, economic, and political integration as an urgent need. He says,

*Cultural, economic and political integration with neighbouring peoples should therefore be accompanied by a process of education that promotes the value of love for one’s neighbour, the first indispensable step towards attaining a healthy universal integration* (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 151).

In summary,

*Education and upbringing, concern for others, a well-integrated view of life and spiritual growth: all these are essential for quality human relationships and for enabling society itself to react against injustices, aberrations and abuses of economic, technological, political and media power* (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 167).

Picking up salient passages from *FT*, the above section has focused on aspects of education that are relevant to cultivating fraternity and social friendship. How can these be concretely achieved? Education to fraternity and social friendship could be content-based, that is, teaching specific topics related to the spirit of *FT*; or it could be praxis-oriented where young people are involved in meaningful activities of fraternity and solidarity that offer them an opportunity for experience and reflection. The praxis-oriented approach will have to integrate learning about theories of solidarity with concrete practices of the same. This approach would not only generate motivation among the learners towards a commitment to solidarity but also create a habit that leads to character strengths of compassion and social responsibility. To achieve such an end, the next section of the chapter goes on to propose service learning as a way of promoting the spirit of *FT* in the context of formal education, especially in institutions of higher learning.

## Service Learning in Promoting the Spirit of Fratelli Tutti

In *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* that has now become a principal set of guidelines for Catholic education at the university level, Pope John Paul II asserts that the aim of Catholic education is to promote social justice through the Christian spirit of service to others. This is of particular importance for each Catholic University, and this is “*to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students*” (Pope John Paul II, 1990, 34). In other words, the directive insists that students in Catholic institutions of higher education must be formed to be agents of social transformation. Commitment to social transformation is a concrete expression of Christian charity, which in turn is the expression of Christian faith.

This instruction from Pope John Paul II becomes even more urgent in the light of the agenda proposed by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, whose key teachings and their implication for education we have discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter. In this current section, we would like to propose service learning as a method of teaching and learning that is ideally suitable to realise the goals of *FT*. In this section, we begin by defining service learning, then we go on to discuss the potential of service learning in imbibing the spirit of *FT* among graduates in institutions of higher learning. We also highlight the circularity among spirituality, solidarity and intrinsic motivation, which Pope Francis refers to as “*gratuitousness*” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 139).

Service learning, that is distinct from sporadic community service and professional career-oriented internship, is a reciprocal relationship (Sigmon, 1979) between the learner and the beneficiary (Jacoby, 1996), in which, the learner is accompanied to integrate the encounter with the beneficiary into their mainstream learning, by means of systematic

reflection (Kolb, 2014). It consists in linking the classroom learning to the world of praxis and to learn theories and models from such experience. In this way, formal education integrates the head, heart and hand of the learners, as Pope Francis envisages it to be (Pope Francis, 2020b).

*In service learning, the learners are not merely educated to serve but service itself becomes the means of education. That is, service is both the goal and the means of education. Therefore, it is especially important to recognise that service learning is not a sporadic social engagement but the integration of learning and service in such a way that there is a reciprocity between them.*

In order to implement the teachings of Pope Francis, particularly those expressed in *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, the 'Global Compact on Education' is a project launched by the Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican. In the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Global Compact on Education, the Congregation for Catholic Education (n.d,

p.17) sees service learning as a powerful tool for building a spirit of fraternity and solidarity. This is because, in service learning, the learners are not merely educated to serve but service itself becomes the means of education. That is, service is both the goal and the means of education. Therefore, it is especially important to recognise that service learning is not a sporadic social engagement but the integration of learning and service in such a way that there is a reciprocity between them.

In practice, service learning consists in: (a) selecting a certain number of courses/modules in an academic programme in the institution of higher learning; and (b) planning the delivery of the selected courses in such a way that classroom learning and concrete engagement with a community are integrated. What is learnt in the classroom is put into practice in the field, and what the learner encounters in the field is brought to the classroom to reflect on and to abstract theories and models, while relating them to literature available (Kraft, 1996; Jones et al., 2005; Stanton, 2014). In this model, the beneficiaries of the concrete developmental or transformative project carried out by the students also become teachers from whom the students humbly learn. Thus, learning is not only taking place in the classroom but also out in the fields. It is not only the lecturer who is the teacher, but also the person(s) in the field who is benefiting from the service offered by the student(s).

Since this chapter is part of a book that is in a series of books targeting people who already carry out or intend to carry out service learning, we assume that they will have

access to manuals that provide guidelines on the implementation of service learning in different contexts. Therefore, it is not within the scope of this chapter to describe in detail the nature or the strategies involved in implementing service learning. Hence, in the light of our discussion on *FT*, we would like only to discuss here the efficacy of service learning in carrying out the formation or education of learners in the spirit of *FT*. We provide evidence from literature to support the role of service learning in promoting fraternity and social friendship, and its related virtues and dynamics.

In *FT*, Pope Francis invites educators to train youth, even in institutions of higher learning, in the conscious responsibility that “*extends also to the moral, spiritual and social aspects of life*” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 114). There is an ample body of literature that demonstrates the obvious association between service learning and solidarity understood as social responsibility (Jones et al., 2005). For instance, examining the impact of service learning carried out by international visiting students in El Salvador, Baker-Boosamra and colleagues (2006) point out that unlike the usual social service that perpetuates or tolerates the dependence of Salvadorans on others, service learning exhibits a service of solidarity in an act of partnership. Here solidarity is understood as a “*practice of partnership, focused on collective social action, with the goal of positive social change as a result*” (p.1). Other studies have suggested that by means of critical reflection, humility, and openness to learning, service learning has the potential to promote mutual solidarity that goes beyond service (Cameron et al., 2018; Heldman, 2012).

*Pope Francis extends a plea to welcome “strangers in an attitude of gratuitousness, even if they bring no immediate benefit”. Service learning is a powerful means of cross-cultural exchange and learning that reduces the gap between the host and the visitor.*

One precise expression of solidarity, particularly in the globalised world, is cross-cultural sensitivity. Pope Francis extends a plea to welcome “*strangers in an attitude of gratuitousness, even if they bring no immediate benefit*” (Pope

Francis, 2020, *FT*, 139). Service learning is a powerful means of cross-cultural exchange and learning that reduces the gap between the host and the visitor. It is an evolved educational model that implements the Freirean concept of liberative education (Freire, 1996; Baker-Boosamra et al., 2006). In relation to this, Kraft (1996, p.139) recommends,

*The opportunities for cross-cultural learning are greatly enhanced if the service partners (visitors and hosts) are engaged in written and verbal reflection that is shared with each other throughout the service experience.*

*Service learning has a cyclic relationship with spiritual/religious commitment and social transformation. While spiritual motivation might prompt a faculty member or a student to get involved in service learning, service learning in turn provides a greater motivation for commitment to social transformation and also develops the learners' spirituality.*

Service learning has a cyclic relationship with spiritual/religious commitment and social transformation. While spiritual motivation might prompt a faculty member or a student to get involved in service learning, service learning in turn provides a greater motivation for commitment to social transformation and also

develops the learners' spirituality (O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009). Pope Francis (2020, *FT*, 167) himself points out to the circularity among education, concern for others, and spiritual growth. He says,

*Education and upbringing, concern for others, a well-integrated view of life and spiritual growth: all these are essential for quality human relationships and for enabling society itself to react against injustices, aberrations and abuses of economic, technological, political and media power (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 167).*

Literature on service learning that capture concrete experiences of faculty members and students attest to this circularity (Sikula & Sikula, 2005; Welch & Koth, 2009).

In this connection, it is important to consider that the transformative process brought about by service learning has a dual dimension: personal and social (Meyers, 2009). Those who involve in service learning go through a personal transformation in terms of motivation, compassion, and spirituality. Prompted by this personal transformation, they commit themselves to reach out to others with an aim of bringing about social transformation.

Reflecting deeper on the aspect of motivation, it is also possible that service learning with its relationship with spirituality, as pointed out above, has the potential to accompany a learner from an extrinsic motivation towards social commitment to an intrinsic motivation (Dickerson et al., 2017). Initially, the learning opportunity and the grades might be the extrinsic motivation for the learner to engage in service learning. Eventually, it is the connectedness and altruism that might motivate the learner. Ultimately, the higher purpose of participating in the creative and redemptive work of God or a Higher Being would provide the basis for intrinsic motivation. At this level, the learner gets involved in social transformation as an end itself and because they just find an inner gratification in it.

According to psychologists (Deci & Ryan, 2010), intrinsically motivated people engage in certain activities because they are interested in them, and perceive the activities as providing novelty, challenge, and personal gratification. Unlike extrinsically motivated behaviour, intrinsic motivation does not rely on external reward or praise. Eventually, intrinsically motivated behaviour begins to provide identity to those individuals and what they are engaged-in provides a sense of who they are.

Pope Francis refers to this as “gratuitousness” which consists in

*“the ability to do some things simply because they are good in themselves, without concern for personal gain or recompense. Gratuitousness makes it possible for us to welcome the stranger, even though this brings us no immediate tangible benefit”* (Pope Francis, *FT*, 2020, 139).

In the context of institutes of higher education, often the temptation is to focus on employability and career. However, to form agents of social transformation, as it has emerged from the above discussion, the institutions of higher education must integrate the spiritual dimension in order to achieve a motivation for a long-term commitment to the society. Spirituality is often seen as the domain of campus ministry. While this might as well be necessary, it runs the risk of separating one’s religious life from social commitment. On the other hand, involvement in service learning could promote spirituality that sustains intrinsic motivation for social transformation (Welch & Koth, 2009).

## **African Spirit of Ubuntu, Service Learning and Fratelli Tutti**

In this section of this chapter, we contextualise the concept of solidarity within the framework of the African social philosophy of *Ubuntu*. We propose that service learning is a methodology that carries the potential to socialise the future citizens of any nation in the implementation of the spirit of *Ubuntu*, which is synonymous with solidarity and fraternity. It is not by chance that the Pope himself lists the South African Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, among others, as an inspiration for his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 286). Bishop Tutu has frequently elaborated the meaning of *Ubuntu* in his writings and speeches (Tutu, 2004; Hailey, 2008). Therefore, writing from the context of Africa, we would like to make a unique contribution through this chapter by conceptually bringing together African *Ubuntu* philosophy, fraternity and social friendship as espoused by Pope Francis, and service learning. To begin with we expound the meaning of *Ubuntu*, then we go on to discuss the relationship between *Ubuntu* and *Fratelli Tutti*, and finally, we consider the association between *Ubuntu* and service learning.

*Ubuntu* is a traditional African philosophy that offers us an understanding of ourselves in relation to the social world we live in. The word ‘*Ubuntu*’ or ‘*umunthu*,’ or similar expressions found in most Bantu languages, literally mean, ‘personhood’. However, in South Africa, it began to be used in a philosophical sense drawing inspiration from the Zulu aphorism, *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which could be rendered as, “*A person is a person because of others*” (Lundin & Nelson, 2010, p. 27; Fraser-Moloketi, 2009, p.243; Tutu, 2004, p.25-26). The *Ubuntu* philosophy considers the success of the group above that of the individual proposing that we exist because of our connectedness to the greater human community. According to *Ubuntu*, there exists a common bond between us all, and it is through this bond that we discover our own individual human identity. *Ubuntu* implies social responsibility, deliberative engagement, and an attentiveness to others.

The African concept of *Ubuntu* is in direct contrast to the Western individualism encapsulated in Descartes’, “*I think, therefore I am.*” To Descartes, his identity is drawn not only from the consciousness of one’s own cognition, but also the givenness of the individual self. On the contrary, in the African worldview, one’s identity is drawn from their interconnectedness to the rest of the society, as captured in John Mbiti’s (1969/1994, p.108), “*I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.*”

To Gaylard (2004), *Ubuntu* is the African equivalent of the Western humanism, which has been rendered with different nuances among the various postcolonial African thinkers. It can be traced in Kenneth Kaunda’s ‘African humanism’ in Zambia (Elejo, 2014), Julius Nyerere’s *ujamaa* in Tanzania (Fouéré, 2014), and in the Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah’s concept of ‘conscientism’ (Addo, 1997), among others across the continent. These versions were founded on the African social and spiritual value systems in order to implement a homegrown version of democracy and economics.

For Orobator (2020), the Nigerian-born theologian who is currently based in Kenya, *FT* is just another name for *Ubuntu*. He observes that *FT* elaborates the *Ubuntu* philosophy in a Christian/Catholic context, when Pope Francis says,

“*Each of us is fully a person when we are part of a people; at the same time, there are no peoples without respect for the individuality of each person*” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 182).

In other words, we are “*brothers and sisters all*” (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 8); this is the literal meaning of ‘*fratelli tutti*’ as St Francis used it (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 1). Thus, the link between *FT* and *Ubuntu* is obvious enough, and the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity can truly transform the world. Orobator (2020) further writes,

*For Francis, the radical mutuality of Ubuntu is achievable through love without borders that transforms humanity into a community of neighbours without borders. Like Ubuntu philosophy, Francis argues for a social premium on rights and duties on account of the relationality of humanity, whose deepest manifestation is the ability to transcend the self and create a solidarity of service of others (see also, Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 87, 88, 111).*

Moving the discussion on *Ubuntu* even further, Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Makuva (2014) of Zimbabwe suggest that *Ubuntu* could provide an indigenous philosophy of education for teaching and learning in Africa today. Within the focus of our paper, we suggest that the transformed world, as envisaged by *FT* and *Ubuntu*, can be facilitated through higher education that integrates service learning. Institutions of higher learning can facilitate the implementation of *Ubuntu* and *FT* by embracing service learning. Education to the spirit of *FT* needs to have a concern for others, with a well-integrated view of life and spiritual growth (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 167). As the spirit *Ubuntu* envisages, education has to promote the value of love for one's neighbour (Pope Francis, 2020, *FT*, 151).

In the African indigenous education, a learner was formed to be more conscious of their community (Mosha, 2000). This formation was not necessarily a result of a formal education, even though there was such a period of formal training in many ethnic communities prior to initiation (Mosweunyane, 2013), but it was more a 'service learning' that was carried out in the context of individuals' extended families and their village. This learning was guided by the African social philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

Evidence suggests that the knowledge and competencies acquired through service learning transforms the learners. It empowers even members of minority groups (Jones et al., 2005) giving them an aspiration beyond the self. Learners who have engaged in service learning also attribute an experience of personal gratification in reaching out to others and developing a closer personal relationship (Eyler & Giles, 1999). This is the spirit of *Ubuntu* philosophy and *FT*.

## **Impact of Service Learning on Ubuntu: An African Experience**

Having delineated the educational agenda of *FT* and having argued that teaching and learning that integrates service learning is the best suited method of promoting the spirit of *Fratelli Tutti* in institutions of higher education, we proposed that the *Ubuntu* philosophy is the African perspective on solidarity and fraternal friendship that is facilitated by service learning. In the present section, we would like to narrate the experience of a group of

students and the lecturer of a course delivered at Tangaza University College, Kenya, that integrates service learning as part of its methodology. We reflect how this experiment facilitates compassion for people, passion for social transformation, and commitment to solidarity in the African spirit of *Ubuntu* that is nothing but the spirit of *FT*.

'Ministering to Persons with Disability' is a core course in the curriculum of the undergraduate degree in Social Ministry, at Tangaza University College, Nairobi. The academic programme prepares professionals who engage in social transformation with a Christian perspective in any context. The general objective of the course which integrates service learning is to facilitate the learners with knowledge and skills that will transform them into agents of social transformation with a preferential option for people who are vulnerable especially those with disabilities. To achieve this objective, the lecturer of the course 'partially' integrates the classroom lectures with service learning. As part of the course, the students are offered two opportunities to visit a special school for students with intellectual disabilities and a home for persons with disabilities. The learners are then required to write a personal reflection paper as part of their course assessment. We refer to the implementation of service learning in this course as 'partial,' because it only integrates two visits and interactions with people with disabilities during which the students give out some gifts that they buy with their personal funds; they do not carry out any long-term project throughout the semester or year that would have offered them a longer commitment.

In any case, the reflections by the students do express a deep compassion for people living with disabilities, improved passion and motivation for reaching out to them, and a commitment to develop solutions in alleviating the difficulties of people with disabilities. We begin with the description of one of the visits from the lecturer, and then include extracts from the submissions of two students that demonstrate an inner transformation and motivation for social transformation in their expression of *Ubuntu*.

Below is a narrative from the lecturer on the students' reaction for the first service learning visit to a school of children with intellectual disabilities, followed by some of the student's personal reflection.

*On arrival, the visiting class found the children eagerly waiting for them. This special school, with residential facilities, caters to children with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other developmental delays. The children were all excited to see the university bus parked in their school compound. Perhaps it was the excitement of having visitors or the anticipation of what goodies the visitors will bring. Whatever it was, the air of excitement quickly infiltrated among the visiting students as well. However, from the look of things, some of the university students*

*were hesitant to mingle with the children. Why? It had probably come as a shock that life could be different for some people. Whispers could be heard from within the group, "We need to thank God, and appreciate life... This condition is not an easy one." Clearly, this was going to be an eye-opening experience.*

*The murmurs went on for a few minutes but soon enough the students became bold and begun dancing, playing and doing different activities with the children with intellectual disabilities. At first, it was not easy, but within an hour everything looked normal. Everybody was smiling and interacting with the children, teachers, and the Principal of the school.*

*The students were briefed by the Principal on the situation of the children in their institution. She indicated that most of the children come from extremely poor homes and live in slum areas. She added that poverty and disability are twins - meaning that the two are inseparable. That statement could easily be quantified through observation. The children's dressing was evidence enough that their parents are not able to provide them with good uniforms.*

*After the briefing, the time for sharing came. The visiting students had carried some snacks to share with the children. It was a happy hour! As the goodies were served out, the children were smiling all through. Some tried to talk but it was not clear what they were saying. We assumed they were appreciating our good gesture.*

*After the sharing, the visiting class assisted the school in cleaning and feeding the children who could not do anything for themselves. Though it was the first time for most of the university students to interact with such children, they made a lot of effort to be as empathetic as possible.*

*Apart from this specific visit described, the students of this course had another opportunity for such a visit. These visits were prepared for by a reflection during the lecture hour, followed by the groups making the logistical preparations outside class. After the visits, the students made a personal reflection and shared it with colleagues in the following class. This exercise was in an attempt to integrate the visits into the course material. Finally, the students had to submit a written reflection paper for grading.*

*In general, reflections carried out by the students suggest that they had been transformed from being passive recipients of knowledge to active participants in engaging with the society with that knowledge. The service learning*

*visits transformed the students to view the world of persons with disabilities empathetically, thus impacting lasting change in their lives.*

*A concrete example of the practical nature of this change was that one of the students in that course launched an intervention for caregivers of children with intellectual disability. The project supports the caregivers through skills building, as well as providing knowledge about disability and offering counselling services. This is a concrete expression of Ubuntu, and a direct outcome of the course 'Ministering to Persons with Disability' that integrated elements of service learning (Extract from the reflection from the lecturer, who is the second author of this chapter).*

Similar expressions feature consistently in the reflection papers written by other students of that course that has experimented with service learning. We include two verbatim extracts from students' reflections – we maintain the original language of the students. A male student after his experience of the visit to the school for children with intellectual disabilities notes in his reflection:

*It was an eye-opening experience and made me realise that there is still much to be done to integrate disabled persons into the whole society. Not much can be done if only a few are working towards doing something and advocating for them, it is a process that requires everyone to take part in it. It includes the family, the teachers, government, and the rest of society to work together, including me, to give everyone an opportunity to involve and create a conducive environment for those persons with disabilities to live a normal life (Extract from the student submission for evaluation).*

Similarly, after their experience in a special school for children with disabilities, another student wrote,

*The visit enabled me to think outside the box and more broadly on how in diverse ways and means as a social minister I can help children with disabilities and make them feel accepted in the society. I felt for them because of their physical status due to the unique physical disabilities they had, some unable to maintain themselves and as a result they were unclean. They say, "only the person wearing the shoe knows where it pinches". Indeed, unless you have gone through a certain situation, it is very hard to understand the struggles faced by children living with physical and mental handicaps. It took me a lot of time to feel free to share and interact with them as a sign of love. My personal insight and experience with these mentally handicapped children were that they require to be assisted in all aspects of life (Extract from the student submission for evaluation).*

The above narratives provide ample evidence that service learning indeed transforms the learners. Service learning has the potential to generate gratuitousness among graduates from institutions of higher education. Gratuitousness is at the heart of Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* (Pope Francis, *FT*, 139). It is also a concrete expression of the philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

## Conclusion

In 1996, UNESCO proposed a manifesto for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in what is called the “Delors Document,” which was the result of the discussions of a Commission that was led by Jacques Delors. The document proposed four pillars of education:

- ▶ *Learning to know*: that formal education should not focus merely on imparting knowledge, but offer methodologies of learning, and create in the learners the desire for, and the pleasure in, learning how to learn.
- ▶ *Learning to do*: The document said, *In addition to learning to do a job or work, it should, more generally entail the acquisition of competence that enables people to deal with a variety of situations, often unforeseeable...* (Delors, 1996, p.21).
- ▶ *Learning to live together*: *by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence...to manage conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way* (Delors, 1996, p.20).
- ▶ *Learning to be*: besides knowledge and skills, education needs to focus on imparting formation of learners in the ability to make sound moral judgements, and to build a set of value-based character that will be part of the identity of the individual.

It is the third pillar that has been the subject of this paper. The agenda of learning to live together is close to the heart of Pope Francis as he has expressed it throughout his pontificate. In his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope issued a clarion call to, what he called, the “*mystique*’ of *living together*” (Pope Francis, 2013, *EG*, 87). Here he proposed that the advances in modern means of communication should be

used to bring people together as pilgrims who experience fraternity and solidarity. And if we follow this path the world would be more liberated and hope-filled. In his encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, the Pope recommends that the education to the care for our common home becomes an inevitable expression of solidarity (Pope Francis, 2015, *LS*). The theme of learning to live together was also revisited in the Global Compact on Education (Pope Francis, 2019) as we discussed earlier.

On account of these explicit references to learning to live together and its implication for service learning as expressed in the teachings of Pope Francis, this chapter contribution has a valid entry to the present book that focuses on service learning and the teaching of the Church. More precisely, in this chapter we have focused on the theme of education to solidarity as implied in Pope Francis', *FT*. In the light of this, we have contended that educating young people to the spirit of fraternity and solidarity, consists in accompanying them towards learning to live together – not only with their immediate neighbours but with strangers, and especially those who are vulnerable in the society. We have suggested that service learning carries the potential to realise this ideal within the framework of the formal curriculum of the institutions of higher education.

Without going into the details of how service learning could be implemented in these institutions, we have provided some evidence drawn from literature for its impact on the emergence of the components of solidarity and fraternity among the learners. We have also attempted to offer an African perspective of this relationship between the spirit of *FT* and service learning in the light of the African social philosophy of *Ubuntu*. Finally, as a specific sample, we have included a set of narratives from the lecturer and the students of one course that was delivered in the African context integrating service learning. The narratives suggest that service learning facilitates the spirit of *FT* and *Ubuntu* philosophy so spontaneously and powerfully among students in higher education.

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## 6. ACTUALIZING MISSION AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING

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*One important aspect of holistic student development is spiritual development, and studies have demonstrated that service-learning can be an avenue towards fostering spiritual growth among undergraduates.*

Pope Francis' call to speak the language of the head, heart, and hands in the educational process becomes actualized through the pedagogical method of service-learning. The vision of education offered by Pope Francis

parallels long-standing educational theory as well as the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm of integrating experience, reflection, and action. Service-Learning similarly actualizes the mission statements of Catholic higher education institutions across the United States that speak of a commitment to educating students to serve the common good, a commitment to diversity, and a commitment to education of the whole student. One important aspect of holistic student development is spiritual development, and studies have demonstrated that service-learning can be an avenue towards fostering spiritual growth among undergraduates. Studies have also demonstrated how service-learning can lead to additional developmental and prosocial outcomes that support our mission as Catholic higher education institutions.

### Introduction

In September of 2018, Pope Francis visited Lithuania and shared his perspectives on education with a gathering of 28 Jesuits from different countries. He stated,

*“Education engages the whole person, not only the head. I’ve said this many times and I’ll repeat it: there is a language of the head, but there is also the language of the heart, of sentiment. You need to educate the heart...And there is also the language of the hands. These are three languages that go together. The young people are called on to think about what they feel and do, and to feel what they think and do, and to do what they feel and think. Ours is a human unit, and everything is found therein, including concern for others, engagement. Let us not forget feeling and sentiments...this has to be the road of education.”*

Pope Francis' call to speak the language of the heart, mind, and hands in the educational process parallels the pedagogical method used within Jesuit education for nearly 475 years.

St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, provided a model of education (referred to as the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm) that integrates experience, reflection, and action in a dynamic interplay that ultimately shapes the habits, values, and thinking of students and propels them from knowledge to action in service to the common good (DeFeo, 2009; O'Malley 2015). Excerpts from a 2000 speech given by Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Jesuits, help articulate what the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm means in concrete terms. During this speech to American Jesuit higher education leaders, Fr. Kolvenbach explained how Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of “*teaching solidarity to the younger generation*” and how solidarity is learned through “*contact rather than concepts.*” Fr. Kolvenbach built upon Pope John Paul II's words by explaining, “*When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection*” (Kolvenbach, 2000, p. 10).

Though Pope Francis, Pope John Paul II, Fr. Kolvenbach, and St. Ignatius do not explicitly name service-learning, their ideas implicitly endorse this pedagogical method and are consistent with thinkers who are often cited to explain why service-learning (or experiential learning more broadly) is so valuable. John Dewey's extensive writings on education from the late 1800s to mid-1900s spoke of the value of integrating experience into the educational process. In his 1938 book, *Experience and Education*, Dewey described learning as “*a continuous process of reconstruction of experience*” (p. 87). Dewey spoke of the importance of integrating the head and the heart in the educational process. David Kolb (1981) argues that learning is most powerful when it follows a continual cycle of concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and experimentation—which is clearly quite similar to the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm's focus on experience, reflection, and action. Longer standing than the ideas of Dewey or Kolb are the words of Aristotle (1999) from *Nicomachean Ethics* articulating the central role experience plays in education, “*For the things which we have to learn...we learn by doing them*” (1103a30).

This chapter will explore how the pedagogical method of service-learning can enable the educational vision of Pope Francis as well as the mission of Catholic higher educational institutions to be realized. The discussion begins with a review of common themes found within the mission statements of Catholic colleges and universities. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of how service-learning enables these themes to be put into action. Finally, the chapter concludes with my personal reflections on the transformative power of service-learning.

## Themes in Catholic Higher Education Mission Statements

My interest in the mission of Catholic higher education first developed when I attended Villanova University as an undergraduate. Prior to that time, I had not attended a mission-driven educational institution—or at least not one with a mission noticeable to students. This lack of mission or vision left a vacuum that was quickly and adeptly filled by a student culture resembling what Dean Brackley, S.J. (1988) described as the way of the world. Within my high school, there was a clear social hierarchy determined by physical attractiveness combined with material signs of wealth such as a new car, an expensive house, and an abundance of brand-name clothing. Because one's personal worth depended upon where they were seen to be on that ladder, there was continual competition among peers to move up the ladder—which led to an environment of little trust. In my Southern California high school, it was superficial appearances and material goods that determined one's worth. In other high schools around the United States, one's position on the ladder might be determined by achievements such as grades, SAT scores, and college acceptances rather than clothes, cars, and houses.

When I first began at Villanova, I entered a different world from what I had known in high school—one with a mission that was more closely aligned with what Fr. Brackley (1988) described as the way of Christ than the way of the world. Being a part of this mission-driven educational institution changed my life as I saw that the purpose of my existence could be more significant and meaningful than individualistic, self-centered interests of moving up a social hierarchy.

In those years since Villanova, my continued interest in mission-drive education led me to notice consistencies in mission statements across Catholic educational institutions. These mission statements often mention a commitment to the development of the whole student—not just their intellectual development, but also their personal, emotional, and spiritual development. They typically mention an appreciation for diversity of ideas and people. Finally, there is usually a phrase about educating students to serve the common good and/or work towards building a more just society. Below are excerpts from the mission statements of three prominent Catholic universities in the United States that illustrate these themes.

Georgetown University's mission states:

*“The university was founded on the principle that serious and sustained discourse among people of different faiths, cultures, and beliefs promotes intellectual, ethical and spiritual understanding. We embody this principle in the diversity of our students, faculty and staff, our commitment to justice and the common*

*good...Georgetown educates men and women to be responsible and active participants in civic life and to live generously in service to others.” (Georgetown University, n.d.).*

Boston College:

*“remains committed to leading its students on a comprehensive journey of discovery—one that integrates their intellectual, personal, ethical, and religious formation...As a Jesuit, Catholic University, Boston College is rooted in a world view that calls us to learn, to search for truth, and to live in service to others. To fulfill that mission, we welcome and embrace the contributions of a diverse student body from many faith traditions.” (Boston College, n.d.).*

The University of Notre Dame proposes that, *“The intellectual interchange essential to a university requires, and is enriched by, the presence and voices of diverse scholars and students” (University of Notre Dame, n.d.).* Notre Dame’s mission further states, *“The University prides itself on being an environment of teaching and learning that fosters the development in its students of those disciplined habits of mind, body, and spirit” (University of Notre Dame, n.d.).* Finally, the mission statement ends by speaking of how the University of Notre Dame

*“seeks to cultivate in its students...a disciplined sensibility to the poverty, injustice, and oppression that burden the lives of so many. The aim is to create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice.” (University of Notre Dame, n.d.).*

It is not surprising that these mission statements have consistencies among them as their aims are intimately connected to principles within Catholic social teaching. They focus on the common good rather than individual self-interest. They demonstrate a respect for the dignity of all people by embracing diversity and pursuing efforts to overcome conditions such as poverty that demean human dignity. Their focus on holistic student development is intertwined with human dignity by valuing and caring for the full of who our students are—not just their minds. Finally, whether it is stated explicitly or not, the mission statements aim to educate students who will be in solidarity with most vulnerable among us as advocated by the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education. The Congregation’s 2017 document, *Educating to Humanism in Solidarity*, emphasizes the importance of humanizing education that “pulls down the walls of exclusivity, promoting the richness and diversity of individual talents” and extends the classroom to “social experience where education can generate solidarity, communion, and sharing” (10).

## Spiritual Development as Crucial to Holistic Student Development

As described in the mission statements of Georgetown, Boston College, and Notre Dame, Catholic higher educational institutions typically include spiritual development of students among their aims. Spiritual development can be one of the more challenging aspects of holistic student development to fully integrate across an institution as such efforts are often compartmentalized within campus ministry or a wellness center. It is particularly difficult to find ways to integrate spiritual development into the main area of focus within colleges and universities: academics.

Despite this challenge, it is crucial that higher education institutions find avenues through which spiritual growth can be more deeply integrated into educational experiences--especially given the decline in mental health indicators among young adults. A recent analysis by the United States Center for Disease Control reported that suicide rates among people ages 10 to 24 climbed dramatically between 2007 and 2017 from 6.8 per 100,000 to 10.6 per 100,000 people. Among those aged 20-24, the suicide rate in 2017 was 17 per 100,000 compared to 12.5 per 100,000 in 2000 (Curtin & Heron, 2019; Miron et al., 2019). The Pew Research Center analyzed data from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health and found that the percentage of teenagers who recently experienced depression jumped 59% between 2007 and 2017 (Geiger & Davis, 2019).

Jean Twenge, a researcher at San Diego State University offers her perspectives on why this might be. In her 2017 book, *iGen*, she analyzed studies investigating the relationship between the mental health of young adults and technology use and concluded that increased time on screens is correlated with unhappiness, loneliness, depressive symptoms, and suicide (Twenge, 2017a). Sherry Turkle similarly discussed the harmfulness of screen time in her 2015 book, *Reclaiming Conversation*. Turkle explains that psychology and neuroscience point towards the importance of solitude and how the habit of turning to our screens prevents needed time for self-reflection to “*construct a stable sense of self*” (p. 61).

Not only are today's young adults living in a digital world that has been designed to capture their constant attention, but they are also living in a time where there is an unhealthy emphasis on achievement. Through their annual survey of incoming first-year students, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California Los Angeles, tracks longitudinal changes in behaviors and attitudes among undergraduates. Their analysis of 50-year trends found that students in recent years care more about a school's academic reputation, have an increased desire to get a good job, an increased interest in being well off financially, and an increased desire to

obtain recognition. They are also less likely to rate themselves as spiritual and have less of a desire to develop a meaningful philosophy of life than prior generations (Eagan, et al., 2016).

Other studies have found that young adults are increasingly disinterested or turned off by religion. A 2012 survey of 18-to-24 year-olds conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute and Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs found the majority of young adults believed Christianity to be antigay (64%), judgmental (62%), and hypocritical (58%) (Jones et al., 2012). The National Study of Youth and Religion conducted from 2002-2008 found that only 7% of 18-23 year-olds who were raised in active Catholic families are practicing Catholics themselves. 27% are completely disengaged with religion (Smith et al., 2014).

This decreasing level of interest in spirituality and religiosity is particularly noteworthy because research studies have found a positive relationship between psychological well-being and increased levels of spirituality among young adults (Astin et al., 2011b; Hayman, et al., 2007; Park & Millora, 2010; VonDras, et al., 2007; Walker & Dixon, 2002; Watt, 2003). Twenge (2017b) similarly shares that research has found a correlation between regular attendance at religious services and lower levels of unhappiness, loneliness, and depression among adolescents.

It is apparent from the disturbing mental health trends we are seeing that young adults need avenues through which they can grow spiritually. They need space to reflect upon the big spiritual questions of life: who they are, what they believe, and how they want to align their beliefs with their actions to build a meaningful life. Given the decreasing interest and involvement in religious institutions, colleges and universities cannot assume that traditional approaches to religion will provide opportunities for holistic student development in the way they once might have. As will be discussed in the next section, service-learning shows potential as one avenue through which higher education institutions can engage undergraduates in holistic student development—including spiritual development—within the academic heart of the institution.

## Promoting Spiritual Development through Service-Learning

Defined by Bringle and Hatcher (1996), service learning is a

*“credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course*

*content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (p. 222).*

Numerous studies provide evidence that the pedagogical approach of service-learning can foster spiritual growth within an academic context (Astin, et al., 2011 b; Cherry, et al., 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Helm-Stevens et al., 2018; Kuh & Gonyea, 2006; Lovik, 2011; Radecke, 2007; Sterk Barrett, 2016a; Sterk Barrett 2016b; Yeh, 2010). The largest and most influential of these studies along with my research will be further explored below.

Eyler and Giles’ (1999) seminal book, *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning?* laid the foundation for the field to blossom by demonstrating the powerful learning potential inherent in service-learning. They surveyed 1,136 students from 30 colleges and universities who participated in service-learning. Students were asked to report the importance of various aspects of learning and growth that occurred from their service-learning experience. Findings indicated that service-learning participation had positive outcomes in the areas of personal and interpersonal development; understanding and applying knowledge; critical thinking; perspective transformation (pertaining to one’s assumptions about societal and political structures); and citizenship. The measure of personal development included four aspects related to spirituality including: spiritual growth, appreciating different cultures, understanding myself/personal growth, and belief that the “*people I served are like me*” (p.243). Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that knowing themselves better was either

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a very important outcome or the most important outcome of their service-learning experience. Sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated that appreciation of other cultures was a very important or the most important outcome. Fifty-two percent said that learning that the “*people I served are like me*” was a very important or most important outcome. Nearly half (46%) of the student participants selected spiritual growth as a very important or the most important outcome of their service-learning experience.

Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011a; 2011b) conducted the most comprehensive study of spirituality among undergraduates and shared results in their book, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives*. To measure spirituality and religiosity among undergraduates they developed the College Student Beliefs and Values Survey (CSBV) that was integrated into the annual survey of first-year students conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The CSBV was first administered to 112,232 first-year students in 2004 and was then administered again to a sub-sample of 14,527 students during their junior year. Results demonstrated that service-learning participation had powerful impacts on the spiritual quest, ethic of caring, and ecumenical worldview scales within the CSBV. Astin, Astin, and Lindholm believe that this strong relationship between service-learning and spiritual growth relates to how service-learning offers opportunities for self-reflection, how it enables students to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, and how it can move students from dualistic ways of viewing the world and develops their capacity for critical thinking. They state, “*service-learning appears to work because it enables students to identify and direct their personal goals through an exploration of moral and ethical positions about themselves and their communities, and to relate larger social issues to their own lives*” (2011b, p. 146).

Data from the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) were analyzed in the studies of Kuh and Gonyea (2006) as well as Lovik (2011) to investigate spiritual growth among undergraduates. Kuh and Gonyea reviewed NSSE data from 149,801 first-year students and seniors attending 461 different four-year colleges and universities. They found that self-reported participation in spiritual practices and a deepened sense of spirituality had a significant relationship to whether students participated in service-learning. Utilizing NSSE data from 7,172 first year students attending 442 colleges and universities, Lovik analyzed which student experiences and institutional features related to a self-reported deepened sense of spirituality. Findings indicated that participation in a community-based learning (a term commonly used to describe service-learning) course was the strongest predictor of a deepened sense of spirituality among all curricular experiences. Another variable that related to a deepened sense of spirituality was whether students had exposure to diverse perspectives in classroom discussions and assignments—which would be inherent in service-learning classes.

My own mixed methods research not only explored whether there was a relationship between service-learning participation and spiritual growth, but also sought to further understand what conditions might foster this growth (Sterk Barrett 2016a; 2016b). Data collection was conducted in conjunction with the Boston College PULSE Program for Service-Learning's annual assessment process. The PULSE Program is a year-long program where students take an interdisciplinary philosophy and theology class at the same time they engage in service for 10-12 hours a week.

For the purposes of my study, spirituality was conceptualized in the following manner based upon literature reviews of Astin et al. (2011b) and Love and Talbot (1999): 1) Engagement in a process of reflection to understand oneself and one's purpose; 2) Living one's philosophy of life with integrity; 3) Seeking a connection with a higher power; and 4) Belief in the interconnectedness of humanity. While there is overlap between the concepts of religion and spirituality for some individuals, this is not always the case and the two can be seen as distinct, but related (Astin, et al., 2011b; Chickering et al. 2006; Roehlkepatain, et al., 2008; Smith & Lundquist, 2005; Zabriskie, 2005).

Spiritual growth was measured in two different ways quantitatively. First, there was one question asking student agreement with the statement that they grew spiritually as a result of PULSE. Second, I utilized 54 spirituality variables from the *College Student Beliefs and Values Survey* (CSBV) developed by Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011a). Data were collected from 272 students when they began their experience with PULSE in September of 2012 and when they completed it in May 2013. Findings indicated that a large majority of students grew spiritually in both measures. In the self-report of spiritual growth, 79.1% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they grew spiritually because of their PULSE experience. The pre-test/post-test comparison of CSBV variables indicated that 77.6% of students grew spiritually during their time in PULSE.

Looking at the response to individual CSBV indicators, the overall mean scores for all students changed in the positive direction for all variables. This change was statistically significant for 43 of 54 indicators. Because the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) asked these same questions to a national sample, it is possible to see how the change in mean scores after one year in the PULSE Program compares to the change in means for a national sample of students after 3 years of college. My analysis found that there was a larger effect size among PULSE students than the HERI national sample for 42 of the 54 variables. It is noteworthy that many of the mean scores among the HERI national sample did not change at all or changed in a negative direction during their undergraduate years—which makes the results among PULSE students even more remarkable.

Not only did this study seek to document that spiritual growth occurred, but it also sought to understand how this growth might be occurring. To analyze this, qualitative data was collected through interviews with 11 students. Approximately half of these students were among those whose CSBV results indicated they grew significantly during the PULSE experience. Approximately half of these interviews were conducted with those whose quantitative results indicated that they had no change or negative change during the PULSE experience.

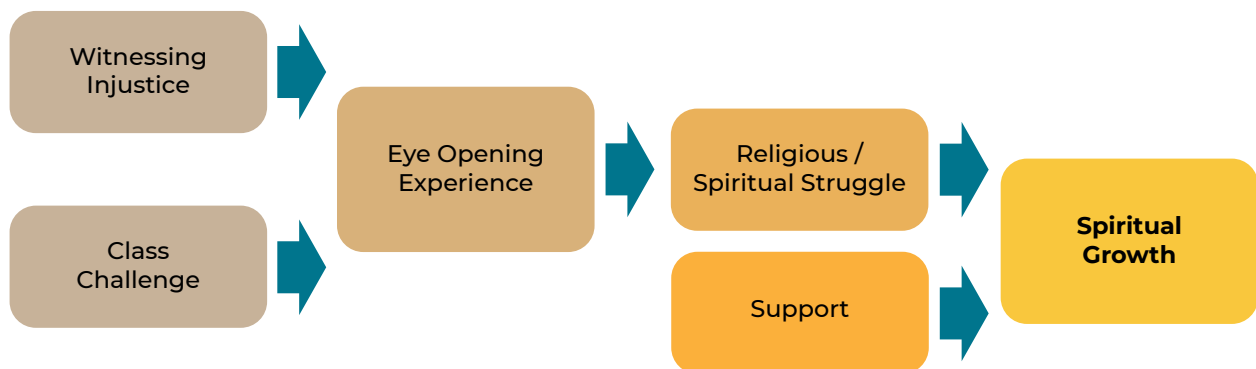
Theories and empirical research on spiritual development describe how young adult spiritual growth typically involves a process of moving from beliefs inherited from authorities and the cultural norms of one's background to beliefs that are arrived at independently through critical thinking (Fowler, 1981; Daloz Parks, 1986; 2000). In other words, young adults need to determine what they believe for themselves in the process of journeying towards adulthood. This process is often initiated through exposure to diverse perspectives that cannot be reconciled with one's previously held assumptions and related cognitive dissonance that challenges one to grow into new ways of thinking and believing. The experience of letting go of one's prior beliefs can be painful and, therefore, requires much support to ensure that students move through it in a healthy manner. Therefore, the interview questions sought to learn more about the challenges students faced during their PULSE experience as well as the support that was available to them from professors, peers, class content, and their supervisors in the community-based organizations where they served.

The qualitative data obtained during interviews pointed towards several aspects of the service-learning experience that were more likely to exist among those who grew spiritually than those who did not. First and foremost, the existence of strong relationships and consistent interaction with people at their service sites were among the key differences between those who grew spiritually and those who did not. These relationships led students to hear stories that presented perspectives they otherwise would not have heard. Students who grew spiritually consistently described the experience as eye opening in the way it contradicted their preconceived notions of people facing poverty, addiction, mental illness, homelessness, and lack of educational success. The students who grew spiritually also grew to care about the people they met at their service sites and subsequently cared about the injustice and suffering they faced. Students described this as emotionally overwhelming, and this led them to deep reflection as they tried to make sense of complex questions without easy answers. Students who grew spiritually also spoke of how their service-learning class exposed them to new perspectives. The class readings, challenging class discussions, and hearing about the service-learning experiences of other students also pushed students towards inner reflection.

Students were generally well supported as they processed the challenges presented in class and their service experiences. Class not only provided supportive relationships, but also provided a theoretical framework through which students could try to make sense of their confusion. Some interviewees even described how their PULSE faculty members reached out to follow up on difficult conversations that had occurred in class.

Integrating the quantitative and qualitative results with spiritual development theories led to this conceptual model (Figure 1) describing how growth may be occurring through service-learning.

Figure 1 *Process of Spiritual Growth through Service-Learning* (Sterk Barrett, 2015, p. 209).



The process of growth begins when students witness how people they have gotten to know and care about at their service sites are impacted by injustice. At the same time students are being challenged by personally witnessing injustice, they are similarly being challenged by class content that asks them to reflect upon ethical and moral questions related to injustice and social responsibility. Students' eyes are opened to the idea that their prior beliefs, perspectives, and assumptions were not entirely accurate. Despite what they might have believed about our meritocratic society throughout their childhood, life is not always fair, and people can suffer because of this unfairness. Stereotypes breakdown as students realize that people in poverty are not there solely because they did something to deserve it. Students simultaneously come to see the relationship as reciprocal and recognize that they are not doing service FOR a deficient other, but that the people they intended to serve have much to teach the PULSE student about life. This experience of having one's eyes opened can be overwhelming emotionally and spiritually and can lead a student to struggle with questioning which of their other fundamental beliefs and perspectives might not be as certain as they once thought. What else might be hidden from their view or seen inaccurately? (It should be noted that this was equally true among students of color as white students). Throughout this struggle, the class framework and supportive relationships are available to help struggling students to make sense of what they are experiencing and move through this process of growth in a healthy manner.

I think another very important thing happens in the relationships and connections built through service-learning experiences—especially among young adults at a school like Bos-

ton College. It is unusual for a student to attend a high achieving school like Boston College without having mastered skills that make life feel somewhat controllable and predictable. Mastering these skills is what enabled students to earn high grades while balancing the rigorous course load and extracurricular involvement expected of students admitted to Boston College. At their service sites, students often witness people living lives that are exactly the opposite in this regard. They do not have predictably, control, stability, or comfort in the same way that most students are used to experiencing. To live in that manner of unpredictability, requires a certain level of faith in an unknown future. In this way, students witness that it is not only possible to let go of trying to control one's life, but that the process of doing so can potentially lead one to a deeper level of faith. As described by one of the interviewees, seeing faith in people facing difficult situations has "*been completely inspiring*" (Sterk Barrett, 2015). She relatedly asserted, "*PULSE has really strengthened my faith.*"

## Additional Service-Learning Outcomes that Support Mission

Along with fostering holistic student development, research has demonstrated there are many other positive outcomes associated with service-learning that can support the mission of Catholic higher education institutions. In 2001, researchers at Vanderbilt University (Eyler, et al., 2001) conducted a literature review to summarize the findings from all service-learning research conducted up to that point in time. They reported that studies consistently found service-learning has a positive relationship to: academic outcomes such as complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development; Personal development such as sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, moral development, sense of social responsibility, and citizenship skills; Interpersonal development and communication skills; Stronger relationships with faculty and satisfaction with the college/university.

More recent studies have also demonstrated a relationship between service-learning participation and retention (Bingle, et al., 2010; Cress, Burack, et al., 2010; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Keup, 2005; Reed, et al., 2015; Song, et al., 2017; Yue & Hart, 2017). Some studies have found that this relationship also exists when data is dis-aggregated by low income, first generation status or ethnicity (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013; Mungo, 2017; Song et al., 2017; York, 2016). For example, Lockeman and Pelco (2013) reported a statistically significant difference in graduation rates among students who did not take service-learning classes and those who had. This difference was even more pronounced among students of color as 71% of racially minoritized students who had taken service-learning courses graduated in six years while only 29% who had not taken service-learning courses did. Studies also point towards greater interest in service-learning among students of color (Christensen, et al., 2015; Lockeman and

Pelco, 2013; Kuh, 2008). For example, Kuh (2008) discovered that students of color participate in service-learning by senior year at a higher rate than white students (which is not true of the other high impact practices analyzed by Kuh). Relatedly, research has demonstrated that racially minoritized faculty and female faculty have higher rates of participation in community engaged scholarship and teaching (O'Meara, et al., 2011; Vogelgesang, et al., 2010).

At the College of the Holy Cross, Isabelle Jenkins and I conducted research to explore the experiences of racially minoritized students in our community-based learning (CBL) classes. We had observed that our semester-end assessment data consistently demonstrated higher mean responses from BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) students than white students and designed a study to further analyze these differences. In the process, we reviewed the results of 1,845 surveys from 59 different community-based learning classes between 2012-2017. We also interviewed 13 students in the spring of 2016 to learn more about their experiences with community-based learning.

Of the 1,845 surveys analyzed, 1,521 included a response that indicate the student's ethnic background. The ethnic breakdown of the respondents paralleled the overall Holy Cross student body with the majority being White/Caucasian (77.1%), followed by Latinx (10.2%), Asian/Asian-American (5.5%), and Black/African-American (5.2%). As we reviewed quantitative assessment results, we discovered statistically significant higher responses among BIPOC students than white students in the following three variables: 1) *Including CBL in This Course Enabled Me to Learn More Deeply than I Otherwise Would Have.* 2) *I Learn Better When I Apply Class Material to Real Experience.* 3) *I Could Have Benefited from Additional Opportunities to Discuss My CBL Experience in Class.* It is also noteworthy that the last two of these three variables point towards a statistically significant difference between male and female responses.

Interviews were then conducted with 13 students from racially minoritized backgrounds (Three of these students identified as African American, three as Asian, six as Latinx, one as White/Latina. Nine of the 13 identified as first-generation college students). Every one of the interviewees referred to a community-based learning class being among their most memorable and valuable learning experiences in high school or college. Consistent themes from the interviews explained why the students felt so positively about community-based learning including: parallels between learning preferences and CBL; characteristics and actions of professors; a desire to serve; an ability to relate; empowerment; and being valued for their assets. To elaborate, students described seeking courses where they could apply course concepts to experience and learn through discussions where they heard a diversity of perspectives. Interviewees also placed a strong emphasis on relationships in the learning process and described how a supportive, caring relationship with their professor was integral

to their ability to learn. A sense of social responsibility was so central to student's identities that they greatly valued how the integration of service with course content enabled them to bring their full self to the academic experience. Relatedly, they appreciated the opportunity to help mentor and support people who they could relate to in the community. This ability to identify with those they met at community-based organizations meant that their CBL sites sometimes felt more like home than the predominantly white Holy Cross student body and that being in the community could help ground them when they felt dissonance between their former life and their current life at Holy Cross. Finally, students spoke about the ways in which CBL was empowering by building their confidence in the classroom, initiating desired classroom conversations, enabling them to see how much value they brought to their community partners because of their ability to relate, and by helping them to better understand societal injustices that had negatively impacted their families and their communities. Consistent throughout these themes was the concept of students being seen through an asset-based lens that saw the gifts they had to offer rather than the deficit-based perspective that had framed many of their prior educational experiences.

Our mission statements at Catholic higher education institutions not only focus on fostering holistic student development and a commitment to service and justice, but they also consistently focus on a commitment to diversity. While many of our schools have been successful in diversifying our student bodies, this does not always translate to a feeling of inclusion for people from racially minoritized backgrounds. Study findings like those outlined above demonstrate how service-learning may be a potential avenue for fostering greater inclusivity on our campuses and may enable us to better live the diversity-related values we aspire towards in our mission statements. At the same time, it is important that service-learning classes be led with intentionality and care to avoid further marginalizing racially minoritized students by centering and normalizing the experiences of white students in class discussions and reflections (Mitchell et al., 2012).

## Concluding Reflections

As previously discussed, my personal appreciation of Catholic higher education began when I was introduced to a new way of thinking about the purpose of life during my undergraduate years at Villanova University. After graduating from Villanova, I followed a path that was "normal" among my friends from college and completely unknown to my friends from home: doing a postgraduate year of service. It was during this year of service that I truly, deeply began to understand what it meant to live my faith and follow what Brackley (1988) describes as the way of Christ. Brackley states,

*“Instead of measuring personal worth by where one falls in a hierarchy, the way of Christ finds self-worth from the unconditional love of God and the love of God that flows through human beings towards one another—a love that exists regardless of one’s ‘success’ in the way of the world.”*

Similar to what I heard from students when conducting research on service-learning and spiritual growth, my life was permanently altered because of the life-changing conversations and moments I had during the year of service. In Pope Francis’ words, it was an education that spoke to heart, head, and hands. As the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm points towards, it was a year focused on experience, reflection, and action that enabled young adults like me to discern how they might live their faith by using their gifts to serve the common good of society.

I spent the year with the Chi Rho service program in the Archdiocese of Hartford and was assigned to work with the Archdiocesan Office for Catholic Social Ministry—an office that strives to live and embody the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Chi Rho was modeled on the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and included community living, full-time service in low-income neighborhoods, and structured opportunities for intellectual, spiritual, and personal growth. The cognitive dissonance I experienced in this work challenged me to the core on a daily basis. This challenge began almost immediately as my new supervisor was dismayed and disheartened to discover how little I had learned about Catholic Social Teaching or social justice in my Catholic upbringing. I was disheartened to disappoint my new boss on my first day of work. As the year went on, I had regular conversations with racially minoritized, lower-income individuals who expressed dismay at the way in which “wealthy” people like me were indifferent to the plight they faced and the injustices they experienced. I certainly did not feel wealthy in earning \$80 a month, but the experience challenged me to face how much wealth I did have because of my education, my social capital, and the unlimited opportunities before me. I worked with children whom I grew to love dearly but was broken-hearted to realize that the innocent joy I witnessed in them as a six or seven-year-old would unlikely remain once they became aware of the unfairness into which they had been born.

At the same time the experience challenged my mind, heart, and soul, the program provided numerous structures to support us through such challenges. Living in community meant there were always peers available with whom we could process difficult experiences and attempt to make sense of what they might mean in the bigger picture. We had a live-in staff member who planned excellent opportunities to reflect, learn, and grow spiritually. We had access to graduate courses that provided an intellectual framework to better understand the injustices we were seeing. There were host families and mentors who helped us to transition more smoothly into adulthood and plan for our future. I have been blessed to remain close with my host family to this day.

I recently had the chance to reunite with the eight other people who participated in this post-graduate year of service and lived in community with me. Though we had not seen each other in 27 years, the slower pace of life during the pandemic enabled us this precious opportunity to reflect with one another about how the Chi Rho program impacted our lives in the long-term. During the reunion, we reminisced and laughed about the many fun memories we shared, but also spoke seriously about the moments we will never forget because of the dissonance between the life we had previously known and our eye-opening experiences during the year of service. Many spoke about being a racial minority when going to work that year and the deep understanding this provided of systemic injustice and racism. More than one person spoke of utilizing this understanding many times over in their professional and personal lives in the years since. Many spoke of the gratitude they feel to have had these experiences deeply imprinted within them in a manner that can never be forgotten.

While I did not have the opportunity to do service-learning as an undergraduate because the field was still in its infancy, this postgraduate year of service included the same components that we aim towards in the field of service-learning. This experience became the foundation for my future personal and professional life. It shaped the values I strive to live by and provided me a new perspective on what it means to live my Catholic faith. I have since devoted my professional life to trying to replicate the Chi Rho experience for undergraduates through the field of service-learning/community-based learning. My original ignorance about Catholic Social teaching, social justice, and structural racism has driven me to learn all that I can about these topics and led them to be a central focus of my teaching, scholarship, and administrative career. The words of Fr. Kolvenbach (2000) ring true in my own life, *“Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection.”*

The powerful transformation that I experienced through my “service-learning” experience is similar to what I have heard hundreds of students say throughout my years of working in this field and what was documented in my research on service learning and spiritual growth. Ultimately, I think the power in service-learning (and service more broadly) is described succinctly in the following quotes from Saint Teresa of Calcutta and Greg Boyle, S.J. In speaking of how we might find peace in our world, Saint Teresa of Calcutta (n.d.) wrote, *“we have forgotten that we belong to each other”* and described how we are all part of the same human family. Fr. Greg Boyle added to the words of Mother Teresa in stating, *“Radical kinship is the only thing that mattered to Jesus... We are one, and we belong to each other.”* (Long-García, 2019). It is in the process of building relationships of solidarity with people facing injustice that our students can tangibly see and understand what it means to be fully human and be reminded

*It is in the process of building relationships of solidarity with people facing injustice that our students can tangibly see and understand what it means to be fully human and be reminded of the value in following what Brackley described as the way of Christ rather than the way of the world.*

of the value in following what Brackley (1998) described as the way of Christ rather than the way of the world. It is in combining these experiences with classroom content that the heart, head, and hands can be in harmony with one another and achieve the type of integrated education Pope

Francis calls us to aim towards. It is in providing these service-learning opportunities that we can more fully live our mission as Catholic higher education institutions.

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## Italo Fiorin

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## 7. GLOBAL COMPACT on EDUCATION AND SERVICE-LEARNING

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### Summary

The chapter intends to analyse how Service-learning can be a pedagogical resource, aimed at reinventing the Global Compact on Education endorsed by Pope Francis, capable of harmonizing the multiple dimensions of the person in an integral development, the relationship among people and the people relationship with respect to the social and environmental reality. According to Pope Francis, education is the strongest instrument of change in the world, but it is necessary to rethink it in depth, because is going through a deep crisis, even more acute today because of the pandemic. And yet, the emergency that confronts us with our human fragility allows us to better understand what the necessary education should be like to rebuild the compact on education that has been fragmented. True education is an invitation to step out of ourselves to the encounter, the compromise, the personal transformation and to transform the contexts in which we live. Educating is an expression of that social friendship contained in the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, it is

*According to Pope Francis, education is the strongest instrument of change in the world, but it is necessary to rethink it in depth, because is going through a deep crisis, even more acute today because of the pandemic.*

service. The Pope's words make us rethink the contents of a renewed curriculum and the ways of educating. From this new point of view, Service-learning is proposed as the guiding principle for this exceptional mending, a

manifestation of a coherent pedagogical vision, capable of embodying the words of the Holy Father in renewed education paths.

### Global Compact on Education and Service-learning

Pope Francis, from the beginning of his pontificate, has addressed the issue of education in a creative, challenging and concrete way, insisting on its centrality and its ability to produce change. In this context, the invitation to reinvent the Global Compact on Education emerged, a demand that arises from an alarm that frequently resound in

his speeches. We are in an educational emergency, caused by the loss of common values to build a collaboration among those who have responsibilities in the education field. Education is an enterprise that demands that all those responsible—the family, the school and social, cultural and religious institutions—be involved in solidarity.<sup>25</sup>

But what does the Holy Father mean when he says: “Compact on Education”? And how can school and university respond? And in particular, what can the pedagogical approach contribute to Service-learning?

## Scenario

We live in a world where uncertainty, precariousness, the risk of deep and dramatic social transformations prevails. The society described by Zygmunt Bauman as a liquid society (Bauman, 2002, 2007, 2009), witnesses the emergence of a new poverty, that of massification, in which individuals are drawn to the desire to standardize themselves, adapting themselves to the schemes, the lifestyle and the aspirations of the mass, so as not to feel excluded. In the global world village, the interdependence of different cultures was intensified, the main problems that affect us locally are not only local.

Pope Francis writes:

*Local conflicts and disregard for the common good are exploited by the global economy in order to impose a single cultural model. This culture unifies the world, but divides persons and nations, for “as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 12)*

Training systems seem dominated by the aspiration to be shaped according to the demands of this global economy, oriented towards the ideal of profit understood as the ultimate value to which everything can be sacrificed. Education is then challenged in its deepest values.

On a global scale, we are witnessing the tendency to prioritize the school curriculum by including those disciplines and competences considered to be most useful, while humanist knowledge is marginalized, the one that has to do with questions of meaning.

Nussbaum (2011) recalls that democracies need a humanistic culture, the economy itself needs it.

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25 Pope Francis (2020a). Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to participants at the seminar “Education: The Global Compact” organized by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City, 7th February, 2020.

Retrieved from:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2020/february/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200207\\_education-globalcompact.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2020/february/documents/papa-francesco_20200207_education-globalcompact.html)

Personal expertise, the spirit of initiative, autonomy are important resources which can be oriented in quite different directions. They can serve the mere individual interest or be directed to increase the collective well-being.

*Only the culture of encounter and the practice of solidarity can bridge this gap, reconciling the development and equity aspects.*

The Supreme Pontiff has many times condemned the risks of an increasingly steady social fracture, between an economic, technological and

scientific development as has never been before and an extreme, growing poverty. Only the culture of encounter and the practice of solidarity can bridge this gap, reconciling the development and equity aspects.

*In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people's welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications. At the same time, we have to remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day, with dire consequences. (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 52)*

The widespread global selfishness tendency, protecting acquired rights and privileges, numb economically developed nations to the needs of the most disadvantaged parts of the world. The culture of indifference, which is both globalized and localized, is growing in every country.

The correlation between the growing individualism and inequalities, between the search for individual affirmation and the loss of the feeling of solidarity, can only be contrasted by rediscovering the sense of being part of the common human family. In light of this belonging, it is necessary to rethink the notion of development, declined today in technocratic and selective terms: it is necessary to reconsider the concept of development, since there can be no true development except with respect to man as a whole. For this reason, education must encourage giving up an idea of development, understood only as economic development, and the idea of progress as something absolutely true, helping to become aware that, in no way, it can be taken for granted that the path of humanity is already written according to the principle of progress.

*Giving up on progress guaranteed by the 'laws of History' does not mean giving up on progress but recognizing its fragile uncertainty. Renouncing the best of all worlds does not at all mean renouncing a better world. (Morin, 1999, p. 48)<sup>26</sup>*

26 t/n UNESCO official translation (1999) "Seven complex lessons in education for the future" <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000117740>

Education is entrusted with the task of teaching to face uncertainties and try to achieve sustainable development to weld the demands of the person and those of society, recovering the necessary balance.

## The urgency of a Global Compact on Education

On 12th September, 2019, the Supreme Pontiff promoted the idea of holding a highly symbolic event, aimed at signing a Global Compact on Education, welcoming all institutions and people who share the importance of creating a great educational alliance.

*However, every change, needs an educational path. We cannot make a change without educating for that change. (...) We must base our educational processes on the awareness that everything in the world is intimately connected and that it is necessary to find other ways to understand economy, politics, growth and progress. We must have the courage to train people who are willing to put themselves at the service of the community.<sup>27</sup>*

It is not an impromptu proposal, but an initiative to entrust the *pars construens* of the rigorous analysis carried out on many occasions and witnessed by speeches, by official pronouncements, by documents, by the great encyclical letter *Laudato si'*; on the dangers

*The Pope coined the metaphor of the educational village.*

of the globalization of the culture of indifference and the throwaway culture, of the iniquitous use of economic

and environmental resources. To a vision obsessively focused on a false centrality of man, as an individual person and an individual species, Pope Francis opposes an alternative vision that requires to be translated into work. The throwaway culture contrasts the culture of care, the globalization of indifference is opposed by the globalization of fraternity; and this will be possible thanks to educational action. That is why the Pope coined the metaphor of the educational village.<sup>28</sup>

The metaphor of the village is powerful and suggestive. It points out the importance of developing neighbourhood, proximity and belonging relationships. The village is the meeting place of generations, the memory of the past is guarded and rules are passed on from older to younger generations. The logic that informs life is that of the community,

27 Pope Francis (2019, September). Message of his Holiness Pope Francis on the occasion of the launch of the Global Compact on Education. Text available in Spanish and Italian at:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190912\\_videomessaggio-patto-educativo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190912_videomessaggio-patto-educativo.html)

28 Ibidem.

not that of formal rules. In a true community everyone is involved, everyone has meaning, the concern is oriented to the common good. (Bornatici, 2020, p. 18)

Education is called to work to build this new global village, where the search for unity and harmony will make it possible to overcome the great fragmentations that are lacerating the human consortium.

*Education is called to work to build this new global village, where the search for unity and harmony will make it possible to overcome the great fragmentations that are lacerating the human consortium.*

In the commitment to rebuild the Compact on Education, there are many companions on the road. The explicit reference that the Holy Father makes to the Orthodox Patriarch

Bartholomew, as an inspiring source for the *Laudato si'*, is exemplary; or the analogous one to the Great Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb for the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

*The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society. (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 271)*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms, in Article 1, that all men are united among themselves by bonds of brotherhood.

The great religions indicate the foundation of this brotherhood and, acknowledging God the Creator, extend it to all creation.

The fraternity bond is the first major expression of the covenant that binds men and women together and with the environment, and sets the foundations of a relationship that cannot be one of exploitation and profit (among human beings), or one of possession and domain (with respect to animal and natural reality). Fraternity expresses itself in caring about each other. Care guarantees the strength of that covenant that bind human beings to support and enrich each other, to continue the creative work through the responsible and passionate use of one's own intelligence.

## Mending the fragmentations

The launch of the compact on education is in the midst of the two encyclicals, *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, which provide the key to interpretation, highlighting three

big fragmentations that need to be mended: one among human beings themselves (from individualism to fraternity), another one between human beings and nature (from the logic of possession and exploitation, to the logic of responsibility and care), and the last one between human beings and God (from self-centeredness to openness to transcendence).

Within these three major problems areas, we acknowledge numerous fragmentations:

#### a) *Mending sectoral knowledge*

No particular scientific sector has an overall vision, no knowledge is self-sufficient, capable of reading and interpreting complexity. The predominance of a fragmented knowledge in the different disciplines makes it impossible to know the crucial problems. To grasp the complexity of human condition, education has to aim at the formation of a thinking adequate to complexity.

Complex global realities are shattered, the human is dislocated and redistributed. The biological dimension, including the brain, is enclosed in biological departments; the psychological, social, religious, and economic dimensions are separated from each other and relegated to social science departments; the subjective, existential, poetic qualities are restricted to literature and poetry departments. And philosophy, which by nature is a reflection on all human problems, becomes a self-enclosed realm. (Morin, 1999, p. 16)<sup>29</sup>

A fragmented thought fails to recognize the connections between economics, technology, politics, ethics and, prisoner of partial points of view, it is incapable of recognizing the unitary meaning of experience. The excessive simplification of complexity, produced by hyper specialized visions of reality, prevents us from recognizing the deepest dimensions of existence, which cannot be brought into measurable parameters: love, gratuity, suffering, joy and pain, fraternity... (Morin & Ceruti, 2018).

It is necessary to harmoniously mend scientific, technical, technological, and humanist knowledge, including also that non-formal knowledge that comes from the cultural wealth of peoples. Scientific knowledge has to 'think' what hand and technique do, but all this must be enlightened by the heart, that is, by art, poetry, spirituality, love.

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29 t/n UNESCO official translation (1999) "Seven complex lessons in education for the future"  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000117740>

### **b)** *Overcome technocratic dominion*

There are natural and technical resources in the world that would allow everyone to have what they need to live with dignity. However, the reality is very different. The cause is the predominance of a 'technocratic' paradigm that puts knowledge at the service of production, with the specific purpose of profit. In this way, individualism and consumerism are nurtured, injustices and inequalities are generated, the planet is polluted and looted.

Technology linked to finance, "in fact proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others" (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 20).

There is an urgent need for an education that promotes development, not only the ability to *know*, but also to *think* critically. The *knowledge* that allows the production of scientific thought is not enough to elaborate the necessary wisdom for a good use of science, because the mere production of knowledge is concerned with guaranteeing control over reality, it does not question the meaning of what is done, while the *thought* is driven by the need to recognize horizons of meaning.

It must be recognized that knowledge is a global public good and every human being has the right to knowledge, because where knowledge is oligarchic and ignorance is widespread, deprivation and injustice grow in a vicious circle. Knowledge is also a responsibility, because it must be at the service of environmental protection, peace building, peaceful coexistence, and human advancement.

It is urgent to link science and technology to ethics to achieve a sustainable development that everyone can enjoy.

### **c)** *Dialogue among cultures and religions*

In the *global village* world, walls cannot hide the multicultural and multireligious composition of our society. Regardless of their causes, the constant flow of people creates a more plural society. This new reality requires individuals and institutions to get involved in itineraries of confrontation and dialogue, capable of generating an encounter between the different identities that give life to society. The one we call "other" is our neighbour. Fear raises "fences" of mistrust, the encounter brings us closer and the dialogue makes us discover members of the same human family. The challenge is to transform closure into openness, mistrust into trust, the encounter into reciprocal enrichment.

In this context, religions have a great task ahead, because they can help women and men of our time to raise their gaze—stuck to the ground by a materialistic conception that has taken over mind and heart—and to open up to the dimension of the transcendent, rediscovering one's interior and spiritual life.

**d) Turn throwaways into cornerstones**

When the logic of profit and results dominates at all costs, the throwaway culture spreads. Elderly are thrown away, because they are no longer useful, children are thrown away, who are used as tools and consumption objects, young people are thrown away, who do not find a job. Education has the task of restoring harmony among generations, because memory is necessary and the elderly are the guardians of memory, and there is a need for hope and children and young people make it happens in our lives. The present is poor if it is deprived of the past and the future. It is important for society to work together in the political, social, educational and religious domains, to create better human relationships, overcoming the different forms of marginalization and building a great network of solidarity and collaboration.

**e) Overcoming existential fragmentation through inner harmony**

In the reality we live in, fragmentation does not occur only in the cultural, economic and political domains, but has roots in the shattered personal experience, which ignores how to mend itself as a unity.

It is an *existential fragmentation* (Milan, 2019), constituted by a personal experience disintegrated in many parts isolated from each other, which cannot be put together.

And even when considering the needs of the human person, this is done in a dissociated way, focusing on particular aspects, instead of focusing on everyone's totality and uniqueness.

*Less and less will people be called by name, less and less will this unique being be treated as a person with his or her own feelings, sufferings, problems, joys and family. Their illnesses will be known only in order to cure them, their financial needs only to provide for them, their lack of a home only to give them lodging, their desires for recreation and entertainment only to satisfy them". (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 193)*

The current human condition is experiencing loneliness and it is not mitigated, but exacerbated by the communication possibilities offered by the big internet network. As connections multiply, authentic interpersonal relationships diminish. The 'virtual places' where exchanges take place are similar to the 'non-places' indicated by M. Augé, referring to such many highly frequented but anonymous places, as airports, department stores, shopping centres... where people get close, but do not meet (Augé, 2009).

And together with the 'no-places,' especially young people, they live the experience of 'no-time,' deprived of memory and the hope for improvement.

The Holy Father invites us to place the person at the centre, in his integrity, in his relationship with others and with nature. It is necessary to act so that the educational process, formal and informal, are intertwined and nurture an educational path of integral ecology.

## From event to process

When Pope Francis launched the Compact on Education with his video message on 12th September, 2019 and fixed the date to celebrate the solemn signature of the Compact, no one could have imagined that, just a few months later, the world would have been hit, as by a tsunami, due to the pandemic caused by the outbreak of Covid-19. The pandemic would change all the agendas and require the review of every programme. The signing of the Compact, scheduled for October 2020, would be cancelled, but not the determination with which the Pope invites us to continue the path of the great educational alliance. The pandemic, rather than interrupting its path, contributes to further underline the urgency.

*On 12th September, 2019, Pope Francis launched the invitation to participate in the event that had to take place in Rome on 14th May, 2020, on the Global Compact on Education, but everything was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, the Pope himself had delved into the subject many times in various speeches and initiatives had been launched in many parts of the world, that multiplied expectations and traced specific learning pathways, aimed above all at educators and young generations.*

*On 15th October, 2020, a new stage began, with a subsequent video message in which the Pontiff placed the Global Compact on Education in the context of the dramatic phenomenon of the pandemic, spread everywhere, and relating it to the encyclical *Laudato si'*, as he had done in the previous message to the new encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. (Zani, 2021, p. 26)*

We may say that what had to be a symbolic event turned into a wide-ranging process, which, as time goes by, becomes even more engaging and necessary. *The Global Compact on Education launched by Pope Francis, began a process that for months now has been rippling everywhere, in many paths and modalities, at various institutional levels.*

*In conclusion, the Global Compact on Education launched by Pope Francis, began a process that for months now has been rippling everywhere, in many paths and modalities, at various institutional levels. The Congregation for Catholic Education, which has the task of accompanying his actions, in addition to collecting and monitoring the most significant experiences promoted in many countries of the world; coordinates a Committee, created for this purpose, which is preparing the guidelines for educators and follows, together with the Foundation "Gravissimum educationis" and the University School "Educare all'Incontro e alla Solidarietà" (EIS) of the University LUMSA, the beginning of the work of further scientific studies of the initiatives. (Zani, 2021, p. 26)*

## Learning to learn

At the beginning of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis recalls, among the characteristics of our time, the acceleration of changes and the increase in complexity,

*Pope Francis recalls, among the characteristics of our time, the acceleration of changes and the increase in complexity, pointing out the concern for the diminishing sense of the common good.*

pointing out the concern for the diminishing sense of the common good.

*The continued acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet is coupled today with a more intensified pace of life and work which might be called*

*"rapidification". Although change is part of the working of complex systems, the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution. Moreover, the goals of this rapid and constant change are not necessarily geared to the common good or to integral and sustainable human development. Change is something desirable, yet it becomes a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity. (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 18)*

For training systems, having to measure against rapidification is a very difficult challenge. In a society where everything changes rapidly, the traditional teaching model of transmission becomes useless, school curricula are forced to be profoundly renewed.

The knowledge economy requires education to include a theoretical understanding of complex concepts in study courses; in addition to the ability to use them creatively to generate new ideas, new theories, new products and new information.

The centrality of Learning, expressed in the slogan *learning to learn*, is universally recognized, but the way of interpreting what this Learning should consist of is not unambiguous. Simplifying, we can say that two different visions face each other: the *functionalist* and the *personalist* (Fiorín, 2014).

In the functionalist vision, the economic reality dictates, both to school and university, which should be the priorities that decide the quality of these institutions. They will enjoy a better reputation to the extent that they know how to better respond to market demands.

In the personalist conception, purpose and objectives must respond to the development requirements of the human person, considered in the integrity of its dimensions. The quality of the learning pathway will be evaluated, not only on the basis of the ability to respond to the demands of the labour market, but also to promote the harmonious development of students. The functionalist vision mainly emphasizes the productive aspects and the cognitive dimension of learning, while the personalist conception also considers the relational and social aspects, of the construction of the personality and of the personal significance of the experience.

## What motivation should be offered to students?

### a) *Utilitarian motivation*

From the functionalism perspective, what counts is the result. Individual action is highly appreciated, the capacity of the individual to make autonomous decisions, to manage alone, to emerge, possibly “taking the first step”. These qualities are associated with values, such as achieving excellence, merit recognition, the ability to compete and achieve success. This vision presents aspects that should not be underestimated. No one can deny the importance of personal commitment, the value of trying to solve problems autonomously, not giving in to the first difficulties. But frequently the emphasis on personal fulfilment is accompanied

by an individualistic conception of education, where there is no place for others if they can represent an obstacle to the desire for personal affirmation. The culture in which we live pushes, in a thousand ways, in that direction, favouring an autistic dimension of personal life and a competitive dimension of the relationship with others. It seems that the only motivation to act is personal interest and the profit that can be derived from it.

### **b) Inner motivation**

Resorting to external forms of recognition to induce commitment to studying is strongly biased and runs the risk of producing more harm than good. Such a narrow understanding of the learning value omits that, for young people, it can be much more exciting to be involved in a project to transform reality; “be bothered” about an ideal that may even seem utopian because it is so great. It is not said that the praise of individual success within an old world where to integrate quickly, is more appealing than the prospect of a new world to be built; than a generous leadership, whose purpose is not the preservation of what already exists, but a profound change. Not only can young people be offered a private sense, but also a social sense of the commitment that is asked of them; they can be associated with a great hope, which is to involve them in building a better world.

Pope Francis addresses young people asking them:

*to correct models of growth incapable of guaranteeing respect for the environment, openness to life, concern for the family, social equality, the dignity of workers and the rights of future generations. Sadly, few have heard the appeal to acknowledge the gravity of the problems and, even more, to set in place a new economic model, the fruit of a culture of communion based on fraternity and equality.<sup>30</sup>*

A motivation based on external recognition does not mobilize the internal dimension of the person and, therefore, does not build interdependence, autonomy, confidence in one's own possibilities, that is, those values that one wishes to achieve.

In education, it is much more effective to link the desire for success with personal responsibility, and not with competitive confrontation with peers, avoiding increasing opposition and favouring the exchange of success attributes.

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30 Pope Francis (2019a). Letter Sent by the Holy Father for the Event “Economy of Francesco,” 1st May 2019. [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2019/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190501\\_giovani-imprenditori.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190501_giovani-imprenditori.html)

## Education is transformation

The Holy Father frequently repeats that “only by changing education can we change the world.” It is an important statement, which contains two messages.

*“only by changing education can we change the world.”*

First, the relevance of education as a “gear lever” is affirmed. Educating is a risk, a

bet, an exercise of hope that helps the weakest to overcome determinism and fatalism, and that contrasts the egoism of the strongest.

Second, Pope Francis says that education as it is does not work well, and that it must be profoundly changed. He invites us to question ourselves about its meaning and about the ways in which we develop the educational process.

We face a serious dichotomy.

Thanks to the contribution of technology, the learning environment expanded enormously, going beyond classroom limits, it became reticular. Also the learning time extended beyond schools to encompass the whole span of life (*Long Life Learning*). For these reasons, our society defines itself as the ‘knowledge society’<sup>31</sup>

But this does not refer to everyone, moreover, educational poverty is rapidly increasing and generates a deep gap between rich and poor countries; the phenomenon of school dropouts, inequalities and punishment of the weakest is also growing within the economically more advanced countries themselves.

There are many more similarities than meets the eye, between school systems in countries with economic welfare and those in poorer countries; both threatened by the invasion of a mercantile culture that, in the interests of profits and dividends, which knows no rules, produces selective education, reserved for the few who can access it.

Along with this, we are witnessing a mass education that is not concerned with the human and social promotion of the poorest, but with reassuring and ‘taming’ *“an education” that would tranquilize them, making them tame and harmless*” (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 60). We are facing a training system that pursues a double standard:

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<sup>31</sup> A European relationship, which has had a lot of influence in Europe to guide teaching processes towards greater coherence with the demands of modernity, is the European Union White Paper on Teaching and Learning (1995), Brussels, subtitled “Towards the Learning Society”.

a standard of excellence for the privileged few who can access the best opportunities; a standard of mediocrity for the vast majority of those who, as Eduardo Galeano (1999) writes, “*are neither rich nor poor*”<sup>32</sup>, and whose destiny is to be consumers. A system that Illich (1973) describes as an enormous “*didactic funnel*” that transforms the diversity and originality of each person into the “*man of consensus*”. Educating is a liberating work, promoting the human person and society; it is an inclusive enterprise, which should not leave anyone aside, because it cannot be accepted that together with the “*people who have the means needed to develop their personal and family lives, but there are also many ‘non-citizens,’ ‘half citizens’ and ‘urban remnants’*” (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 74).

To build this new humanism, which the reconstruction of the Compact on Education focuses, a first essential step is to educate people “to a new thought, that can reconcile unity and diversity, equality and freedom, identity and otherness.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to change. “*It must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed*” (Pope Francis, 2014, EG, 74).

## Service-learning and the Pedagogy of Pope Francis

Service-learning has its origin well before the Compact on Education proposal (early sixties). First developed in the United States and Latin America, today it is widely implemented in schools and universities around the world, where educators and students of all beliefs and cultures live the experience. Although the philosophy that inspires this approach cannot be considered an expression of the pedagogical culture of the Catholic world, there are multiple contact points with the educational thought of Pope Francis and it is interesting to make a pause in these contact points, which highlight a double positivity.

On the one hand, Service-learning is presented as a pedagogical and educational practice proposal, capable of materializing the many requests with which Pope Francis invites us to rethink education. On the other hand, the thought of the Holy Father contributes to enrich the meaning of most characteristic educational aspects, so that, when finding that meaning, the educational spectrum of Service-learning is further enriched.

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32 Galeano (1999) writes in a beautiful text: “Day after day, children are denied the right to be children. The acts that make a mockery of this right, impart their teachings in everyday life. The world treats rich children as if they were money, so they get used to acting the way money acts. The world treats poor children as if they were garbage, so then they become garbage. And those in the middle, the children who are neither rich nor poor, are tied to the television set, so that from an early stage they accept being trapped in life as their destiny. Children who can actually be children have a lot of magic and luck”.

33 Congregation for Catholic Education, 2020. *Instrumentum Laboris*.

<https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/instrumentum-laboris-en.pdf>

We can consider Service-learning as a concrete, practicable possibility of responding to the Pope's call; a great opportunity offered to teachers to contribute to the reconstruction of the Compact on Education, initiating processes of change based on their own reality and the links with their own culture and community.

*The true service of education is education to service. Moreover, educational research also increasingly recognizes the central dimension of service to others and the community as a tool and as an end of education itself.*

*We can consider Service-learning as a concrete, practicable possibility of responding to the Pope's call; a great opportunity offered to teachers to contribute to the reconstruction of the Compact on Education, initiating processes of change based on their own reality and the links with their own culture and community.*

*Think for example about the great development of Service-learning. This kind of research shows how service can be not only a training activity among others (the importance of volunteer work in the training of young people is well recognized), but more radically how it can become the fundamental method*

*through which all knowledge and skills can be transmitted and acquired. We could point to this process as a development from education to service to education as service, whereby our brethren are both the way and the goal of education.<sup>34</sup> (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2020)*

In his message to young people, on Palm Sunday 2020, Pope Francis focuses his reflection on the meaning of 'service.' The speech is delivered within a very difficult situation due to the pandemic that made women and men worldwide undergo a hard test. But the pandemic, revealing the fragility that characterizes us as human beings, leaves us in a position to better understand what is truly important when people are in dire need, and to appreciate the capacity for service witnessed by many men and women who care for and comfort people tested by Covid-19.

These are the heroes to admire.

*The tragedy we are experiencing at this time summons us to take seriously the things that are serious, and not to be caught up in those that matter less; to rediscover that life is of no use if not used to serve others (...)*

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/instrumentum-laboris-en.pdf>

*Dear friends, look at the real heroes who come to light in these days: they are not famous, rich and successful people; rather, they are those who are giving themselves in order to serve others. Feel called yourselves to put your lives on the line. Do not be afraid to devote your life to God and to others; it pays! For life is a gift we receive only when we give ourselves away, and our deepest joy comes from saying yes to love, without ifs and buts.<sup>35</sup>*

The pandemic, says the Holy Father, makes us understand that, in our vulnerability, we are all in the same boat; called to rediscover that “*awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another*” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 32).

Solidarity, competence at the service of those in need and mutual care will save us from the storm.

With brave words, Francis offers young people an alternative proposal to the message they continually receive from a culture soaked in egocentricity, which Forde (2005) calls *dissocialized*.

The Pope condemned in many opportunities the close relationship between the growth of individualism and inequalities, between the search for individual affirmation and the loss of the feeling of solidarity. He recommends that young people adopt a different logic, against the tide, the logic of service, being aware that the human person is not a monad, isolated, closed in on itself, self-sufficient:

*We are not isolated monads, like billiard balls that meet and hitting one another on the green carpet of life. We are social beings, although conflictive, selfish, who need the altruism of others. This contradictory situation makes coexistence difficult and learning to live together appears, once again, as the main educational task.* (Marina, 2013, p. 6, own translation)

Service-learning—understanding learning in terms of advantage not only individual, but also social—educates to open up to others, enabling an authentic and supportive encounter. It has a dual purpose: to promote in students the development of disciplinary and general skills (*hard and soft skills*), closely related to the development of the curriculum; and to make available such skills, to address needs present in the context of life itself, through the design and implementation of competent interventions (Fiorín, 2016).

Service-learning trajectories reveal multiple contact points with the richness of Francisco’s pedagogy.

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35 Pope Francis (2020c). Message to the Youth, Palm Sunday.

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2020/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200405\\_omelia-palme.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200405_omelia-palme.html)

*Service-learning trajectories reveal multiple contact points with the richness of Francis-co's pedagogy.*

In the strong and poetic message that Pope Francis addressed to Scholas Occurrentes, on the occasion of the launching of

the University of Meaning, the three criteria that education must follow are indicated: *“Education is listening, or it does not educate. If one does not listen, one does not educate. Education creates culture, or it does not educate. Education teaches us to celebrate, or it does not educate... Harmonizing the language of thought with feelings and actions. That is what you heard me say many times: the language of the head, of the heart and of the hands, synchronized. Head, heart and hands, growing harmoniously.”*<sup>36</sup>

#### a) Listen

Educating is not just academic, observing the world from afar, but committing to reality. Milan writes (2019, p. 12):

*Pope Francis' 'pedagogy of harmony' goes hand in hand (...) with which we could define his 'exit pedagogy.' We know that 'going forth' is another of the ideas-force that Bergoglio uses, almost as an imperative to listen and coherently obey on the part of each one, all the more on the part of educators. This concept is closely linked to the very effective 'do not sit on the balcony'”.*

The expression *sitting on the balcony* indicates to be observing from the balcony in slippers, without being questioned and moved; having eyes and not seeing, ears and not hearing; indifferent or sceptical.

As the Pope states: *“Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord's wounds at arm's length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others.”* (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 270).

Becoming a 'neighbour' means get out of one's own cage, and going to meet those who are in need.

Service-learning educates this human availability.

36 Pope Francis (2020d). Video Message of his Holiness Pope Francis to Mark the Global Cyber Meeting organized by the Pontifical Scholas Occurrentes, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.  
[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2020/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200605\\_videomessaggio-scholas-occurrentes.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200605_videomessaggio-scholas-occurrentes.html)

Each Service-learning experience starts from listening to reality, an attentive and empathetic listening, which allows us to accept the problematic aspects, the evident or hidden needs, that demand that someone take care of them. Service-learning is 'looking with the heart', as the Good Samaritan did in the evangelical parable, who did not pass by the body of the wounded man, did not look away. Rather, he felt challenged and knew how to listen to the request for help.

Service-learning is a pedagogical approach that helps students to listen with their hearts, to see and feel they are called to the cause; it places them in front of real problems, which they can face thanks to the school or academic competencies they are developing. But it is not about carrying out a simple exercise or a drill, but about carrying out solidarity and competent actions, capable of responding to problems that are really present in the social context. The pedagogical device used is that of research/action/reflection.

*Service-learning is a pedagogical approach that helps students to listen with their hearts, to see and feel they are called to the cause; it places them in front of real problems, which they can face thanks to the school or academic competencies they are developing.*

The first moment foresees research, study, because it is necessary to know in depth the problems on which the attention is focused. A superficial knowledge is not enough, a deep understanding is required, critical thinking is required

(analysis, recognition of correlations, conceptualization, evaluation). It is necessary to pay much attention to the *Learning* dimension, which is nurtured by the disciplines provided in the curriculum. Otherwise, solidarity action would be developed as a voluntary service, it would not satisfy the nature of Service-learning, which provides for an essential integration between learning and service. It is the integration between these two dimensions which represents the originality of Service-learning and highlights its educational value. As many investigations show (Furco, 2001), if students use the competences acquired in the educational path to respond to problems present in the social context, they improve not only the quality of their learning, but also the motivation to learn and their openness towards the others.

Getting students to test themselves with real problems requires including into the school curriculum a strong openness to reality in its social, cultural, and environmental aspects.

In this way the meaning of curriculum is rethought, which must be connected with the experience of students; and the conception of school subjects is renewed, understood not

as deposits of lifeless knowledge, but as tools for solving problems, keys to understanding the needs present in the context of life.

### **b) Create**

“*Responsibility*” comes from the Latin “*Respondeo*” (I respond).

The desire to respond, to commit oneself, to give one’s own contribution is born from listening to reality with our intelligence and our heart. Responsibility, as an answer to the problems we have discovered, creates the bridge between academic learning (*Learning*) and solidarity intervention (*Service*).

Testing yourself with real problems is the best way to develop creative thinking, capable of recognizing solutions, of generating positive changes.

But it is not enough to educate critical thinking without an education to ethical thinking and the assumption of personal responsibility, which allows not only to overcome the limit of an educational process focused exclusively on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of competencies limited to the classroom reality, but enriches the learning carried out with social value. Committing yourself by offering your own contribution to respond to real needs increases the sense of the importance of what has been learned. Didactics becomes an invitation to encounter, to emerge from self-referentiality, a contribution to understanding the problems of today’s world, to feeling challenged, to be engaged.

You become responsible citizens when we care about the reality in which we live, not simply our individual interest; when we take care of the natural and social environment for which we feel responsible. Education is fulfilled when training students who do not only care about being highly prepared, but also enhanced in humanity.

### **c) Celebrate**

Listen, create and celebrate, that is the pedagogical itinerary indicated by Pope Francis. The celebration closes the circle; it is the moment of awareness and gratitude, the moment to party and share. An experience is meaningful if it makes us grow as people, and being aware of it produces gratitude. We discover that the path made has been interwoven with encounters that have spiritually enriched us. These encounters

are intertwined with unexpected knowledge, with new views of the world, especially with relationships, with ties that were strengthened, with a sense of community that has been enriched, with what we were able to offer, with how much we have received. Celebrating means acknowledging the gift we have received, which is much more than what we have been able to give.

What is being celebrated is a reversal of logic. From the utilitarian culture with the scale of values of personal success that places *possession* in the highest rank, to the personalist culture where, thanks to the value of the *gift*, ranks change. The value of becoming and being comes first: to be richer in meaning, to be at peace, to be human.

It has been said that education is a double gift process. The first gift is the one that the educator gives to young people, a gift of wisdom, of teaching, of testimony; the second gift is the one that young people themselves will then give to their own community, where they will bring the benefit of what they have learned (Puig-Rovira, in Bornatici, 2020). But a third gift could be added: the one that is received in exchange, thanks to the gift that was given to others.

In Service-learning this is very evident. Students receive much more than what they do through their solidarity actions; educators can testify that the same thing happens to them.

Service-learning is not a welfare-like approach, it does not have a unidirectional trajectory—from the benefactor to the beneficiary—but it is a circular movement also with regard to service. In Service-learning, the one who gives also receives, in a symmetrical relationship according to the principle of solidarity. Service-learning is an experience of solidarity that involves all participants in a meaningful and enriching relationship for all.

*The word “solidarity” is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few. (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 188)*

Service-learning projects anticipate a final moment called ‘celebration,’ where the results of the experience carried out are shared and very frequently it happens that this takes place in a party context, with all the participants of the project. We can see this final moment as a moment of celebration, of mutual gratitude for what each one gave to the others, the moment of the ‘third gift.’

## Integral education and universal fraternity

Everything that has been said so far allows us to affirm that Service-learning is a proposal that addresses the integrity of the person, promoting the development of the *head* (a well-made head), of the *hand* (competence in action) and of the *heart* (availability towards others, solidarity). No wonder we can recognize that it is a proposal that assumes the perspective of integral ecology in the educational and didactic fields.

Educating to know, to think critically, to intervene responsibly, is the condition to help students to build a unitary vision and to locate themselves in historical and geographical spaces and times, but also in those of nature and the cosmos. Both scientific and humanistic training contribute to the training of a person aware of its own identity, history, local and planetary location; aware of the multiple interdependencies that unite spaces, times, societies, environments; capable of assuming responsibilities. This is how the school experience and existential demands are composed of, the school becomes a place of life and openness to the external world, the required learning becomes good sense, meaning, turning into a resource for the person and a gift for the community.

The key word for building a different society is *fraternity*. The new paradigm that opposes the predatory and destructive paradigm of individualism is the paradigm of gratuity. The invitation for those who want to contribute through education to improve society is:

*to think gratuity, and therefore fraternity, as key factors of the human condition and, consequently, to see in the practice of gift the essential requirement for the State and the market to work with a view to the common good. Without extensive practices of gift, an efficient market and a strong (and even fair) State may be possible, but people will certainly not be helped to reach the joy of living. The reason for this is that efficiency and justice, even when they are together, are not enough in order to guarantee the happiness of people. (Zamagni, 2009)*

## Conclusion

Facing the challenges imposed on the human condition by an individualistic culture that projects “dark clouds over a closed world” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT), with the risk of imposing a unique cultural model, which manipulates man and destroys the environment, the Holy Father asks education to be renewed, working to rebuild, according to the principle of a Global Compact on Education, the new *educational village*. The proposed challenge to education requires not only to reinforce awareness of human rights, both individual and social, but also to understand the insufficiency of affirming them with vigour and even making them an

object of study, if this does not translate into personal and collective commitment. School and university are called to contribute to this vision and to this commitment, bringing learning communities to life, where the values of listening, meeting, dialogue, solidarity, and the common good are experienced and put into practice. Service-learning represents a particularly effective instrument for this to be done.

School and university are called to participate in the beauty of the commitment to change the world. Therefore, can we affirm that educational action is political action? And that Service-learning is a pedagogical instrument of political action? Or better yet, political love?

We think that it is indeed, in the terms that Pope Francis himself suggests:

*Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian...becomes a noble exercise of charity. For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the 'field of charity most vast, namely political charity.'* (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 180)

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## 8. SERVICE LEARNING AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHURCH'S CALL FOR JUSTICE, PEACE, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

Based on the commandment to love God and one's neighbour, the Church is called to give witness of its faith in the public realm, indicated by its notion of 'social mission'. The Church has never ceased to emphasise the theological groundings for the intrinsic link between faith and commitment to the common good and, as I aim to show, thus implicitly justifies *why* service learning matters for Catholic Higher Education in the first place. As Catholic Social Teaching (CST) also explicitly reflects on the practical ramifications of this social mission, the subsequent question is *how* this rich tradition can inform the concrete implementation of service learning. At least three key notions appear to be crucial. Firstly, there is CST's particular relational conception of justice, which envisions the inclusion of the most vulnerable in society through mutual reciprocity. Secondly, ideas such as the 'culture of encounter', fraternity, and social friendship can be considered an attempt to respond to current conflicts, fragmentation, and polarisation and thus as seeds for peaceful coexistence. Lastly, the shift in CST from the notion of 'integral development' (of each person and every person) to 'integral ecology' signifies a rising awareness of our interconnectedness with the whole of creation. As such, integral ecology challenges service-learning initiatives to foster not only lasting interpersonal relationships (which the three key notions plead for), but also sustainable development.

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In sum, through its combination of theory and praxis, reflection and action, service learning offers a unique opportunity to not only become aware of but also concretely embody the social implications of

neighbourly love. This chapter aims to show both why service learning should be considered an indispensable part of a Catholic education and also how the tradition of Catholic social thought inspires the practical implementation of service learning enabling it to respond the Church's call for justice, peace, and sustainable development.

## Introduction

In her book *Not for Profit*, American philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that democracy needs the humanities (Nussbaum, 2016). Although expertise and technical skills are certainly required as well, democracy is at risk when people are no longer able to feel compassion, lack critical thinking, and accept the status quo. As a counterbalance, we need global citizens with bold imaginations capable of critical thinking who develop empathic understanding through diverse experiences that can encompass the complexity of the reality of life on this planet, if we are to survive on it together. The concept of service learning seems a perfect fit here as it supports the 'Bildung' of young people beyond mere education in this way.

From a philosophical point of view, there is much to be said about the value of service learning within educational institutions, but in keeping with the scope of this book, I will approach this matter theologically rather than philosophically, in an attempt to clarify the following question: what elements can we derive from our Christian inspiration to inform our approach to service learning in order to stimulate, nourish, and experience compassion, and create a society in which we do not simply live alongside each other but truly come together?

In this chapter, I will first elaborate on the intrinsic link between faith and a commitment to the common good which implicitly justifies *why* service learning matters for Catholic higher education in the first place. Secondly, I will discuss the implications of this link as seen in Catholic social teaching (CST)'s call for justice, peace, and sustainable development. In conclusion, I will show how this rich tradition consequently informs the concrete implementation of service learning.

### 1. On the link between Christian faith and social engagement? Theological groundings for service learning

As a theologian with a passion for social ethics, the question why service learning is important for Catholic education seems rather redundant and its answer self-evident. In this section, I aim to elaborate explicitly why including service learning within the framework of the Catholic educational project is not just a good idea, but an absolute 'must'. Hence the consequent question: what are the theological groundings for this claim?

The underlying premise is the unbreakable link between Christian religion and practice,

between professing one's faith and acting on it. Within Christianity, social engagement – or service – is not merely a way of expressing religious belief, but it is in fact an intrinsic component of it. Identifying Himself with 'the least of our brethren' in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus invites us to embody our faith in concrete praxis (cf. Matt 25: 35-45, NRSV). The Letter of James in the Bible teaches us that "*faith without works is dead*" (Jam 2: 14). Exactly five decades ago, the Synod of Bishops in 1971 wrote *Justice in the World*, with its well-known though not uncontroversial statement:

*Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.* (Synod of Bishops, 1971, 6).

More recently, it is noteworthy that Pope Francis, in his Papal Exhortation on evangelization *Evangelii Gaudium*, dedicates an entire chapter to the 'social dimension' of evangelization. He explicitly states that "(...) *if this dimension is not properly brought out, there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization*" (Francis, 2013, EG, 176). Throughout history, peoples and communities remind us of the importance of the connection between Christian faith and *praxis* or service. But what is the theological rationale to consider service such an essential, constitutive, and integral component of Christian faith?

Firstly, the incarnation depicts a serving God who invites us to follow in His footsteps. American theologian Stephen Pope points out how most religions place God – or multiple gods – at the centre: customs and rituals call on the faithful to honour their God(s) as a means to serve them (cf. Pope, 2015, p. xv). In Christianity, a contrary reversal takes place: Jesus is the human incarnation of a God who comes as a servant to serve human beings. Indeed, "*the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve*" (cf. Mc 10: 45). In their turn, the followers of Jesus are called on to serve God and Jesus by serving each other. Hence the central significance of the commandment to 'love thy neighbour'. The reduction of religious practice to attendance at Sunday Mass is far from satisfactory, as it allows the church to function as some kind of 'spiritual petrol station' where we refuel for the rest of the week. Rituals and liturgy are a necessary but insufficient part of what it means to be Christian, but we also honour God through service; by loving our visible neighbour, we love the invisible God.

Secondly, God's self-revelation shows us the importance of social engagement to our faith. God discloses Himself as a god of the living who is '*close enough to touch*' ('*rakelings nabij*'), in the words of the Dominican Edward Schillebeeckx. Moreover, God is not only nearby but is actively committed to this world as everything is "*supported by God's*

*absolute saving presence*" (Schillebeeckx, 2018, p. 96) whether or not we are aware of it and explicitly signify it as such. This divine salvation is not exclusivist, but universal and thus "for all"; neither is it merely eschatological and future-oriented, as it is already perceptible in the present; nor it is merely spiritual, but also material and thus takes all aspects of human flourishing into account. The divine presence is not to be reduced to religions. Rather, it is present in the world and in human history: "*no salvation outside the world*". God promises eschatological fulfilment for every human being, breaking up history to realise it. This grace will, however, not be bestowed on us vertically; it is in and through the world that God is working for human liberation, mediated through the agency of human beings (cf. Schillebeeckx, 2016, p. 112). Traces of God's active and salvationist presence can be found in any struggle against oppression and injustice and wherever more just and peaceful relationships are established. At stake is thus "*not simply the ethical consequences of the religious or theological life; rather, ethical praxis becomes an essential component of a life directed to God, of the 'true knowledge of God'*" (Schillebeeckx, 2018, p. 98). In other words: if we choose to believe and dare to hope that God's presence in a history all too often characterised by suffering and oppression is one of resistance to it, service is not only a response to the life and appeal of Jesus (following in Jesus' footsteps in practice) but also and even more fundamentally a way of finding and encountering God. For Schillebeeckx, "*the most obvious, modern way to God [is] to encounter fellow men and women in a liberating way, inter-personally and through political structures. (...) God is not accessible outside a praxis of justice and love*" (Schillebeeckx, 2018, p. 96). In following in Jesus' footsteps and his liberating praxis, we ourselves also reveal God. As the title of his book *The Human Story of God* suggests, people are the words with which God tells God's story—especially when they are working towards liberation and justice.

*Introducing service learning in Catholic higher education, is of crucial importance to do justice to the importance of praxis, neighbourly love, and social commitment as an indispensable part of our Christian faith.*

In sum, though important for the mission of the Church and thus for any organisation working in its inspiration such as Catholic education, to reduce evangelization to preaching and introducing people to the Christian

narrative and its liturgy is to curtail the Church's mission. For it runs the risk of "*diakonia forgetfulness*" (Decoene, 2016, p. 158): focusing on religion as merely the transfer of knowledge, rituals, and liturgy, risks losing sight of service altogether. Introducing service learning in Catholic higher education, is of crucial importance to do justice to the importance of praxis, neighbourly love, and social commitment as an indispensable part of our Christian faith.

## 2. The Church's social mission as a call for justice, peace, and sustainable development

After having argued that social commitment is an indispensable part of Christian faith, and thus that service learning should be considered a crucial aspect of Catholic education, the next question to be addressed is this: what are the practical ramifications of the Church's social mission according to CST? The answer will shed light on how it informs the concrete implementation of service learning in the following and last step. At least three key notions appear to be crucial, which I will address here. Firstly, there is CST's particular relational conception of justice. Secondly, ideas such as the 'culture of encounter', fraternity, and social friendship can be considered an attempt to respond to current conflicts, fragmentation, and polarisation and thus as seeds for peaceful coexistence. Lastly, the shift in CST from the notion of 'integral development' to 'integral ecology' signifies a rising awareness of our interconnectedness with the whole of creation and thus the need for sustainable development.

### (1) *A relational understanding of justice*

Broadly speaking, the call for neighbourly love can be expressed and embodied as either charity or justice. While the former involves meeting needs immediately and directly, the latter offers more structural solutions to tackle the root causes of the problems rather than merely the symptoms. Within Catholic social thought, a continuing debate about which form of neighbourly love or service is the 'essence' of religious practice puzzles theologians, bishops, and even popes. Though it was not the starting point of the discussion, the aforementioned statement of the Synod of Bishops of 1971 is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago when they argued that pursuing justice and transforming the world is a "constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel". The bishops unquestionably linked this concern for justice to neighbourly love:

*Christian love of neighbour and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbour. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love. (Synod of Bishops, 1971, 34).*

While each argues that both charity and justice are important for society, there is a notable difference in emphasis and tone in the social teachings of recent popes Benedict

and Francis. The former stresses charity as the “*opus proprium*” of the Church (Benedict XVI, 2005, DCE, 29) – he calls it the Church’s most specific and typical task, a task which should be carried out at “all levels” (Benedict XVI, 2005, DCE, 32). Pope Francis, on the other hand, insists that taking part in building a more just society and world lies at the essence of being a church. In *Evangelii Gaudium* he writes, for instance that,

*the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of “charity à la carte”, or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that He reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. (Francis, 2013, EG, 180).*

Solidarity and thus the social engagement of Christians should be more impactful than “*sporadic acts of generosity*” (Francis, 2013, EG, 188); it should pave the way for fundamental solutions getting to the root of problems (cf. Francis, 2013, EG, 59 and 202). Most recently, he repeated in a similar vein in *Fratelli Tutti*:

*There is a kind of love that is “elicited”: its acts proceed directly from the virtue of charity and are directed to individuals and peoples. There is also a “commanded” love, expressed in those acts of charity that spur people to create more sound institutions, more just regulations, more supportive structures. It follows that “it is an equally indispensable act of love to strive to organise and structure society so that one’s neighbour will not find himself in poverty”. It is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering. If someone helps an elderly person cross a river, that is a fine act of charity. The politician, on the other hand, builds a bridge, and that too is an act of charity. While one person can help another by providing something to eat, the politician creates a job for that other person, and thus practices a lofty form of charity that ennobles his or her political activity. (Francis, 2020, FT, 186).*

This does not mean that charity is unnecessary, but it is not sufficient in the long run. At first, charity can appear to be vitally important, often literally saving lives in concrete situations where people in need require immediate support. Yet reducing the service of neighbourly love to charity alone risks depoliticising compassion and thereby creating a blind spot for the underlying causes of problems such as poverty, inequality, and marginalisation – especially in our society, which all too easily blames structural problems on personal shortcomings.

If not only implementing charity, but also pursuing justice is part of the public role of Christians, the next question becomes: what concept of justice do we aim to realise? I find it illuminating to consult the biblical view on justice, which can be found in both the First and Second Testament (cf. Kammer, 2004). When confronted with *anawim* – meaning literally: ‘the small’, ‘those who are overwhelmed by need’, which the Bible tends to identify as widows, orphans, refugees, and the poor – the Bible calls on God’s people to provide justice, namely by restoring the right relations.

Commonly understood as ‘giving to each his or her due’, justice is often conceived as something measurable that can be balanced, symbolised by the Lady Justice with her blindfold and scales. Biblical justice transcends this view and broadens its scope because of its relational understanding. Grounded in the experience with and revelation of God as Creator and Liberator, who established a covenant with a people – not just an individual –, the community is requested to strive for the ‘right relationships’, treating each other with love and justice as God is loving and just. Prophets like Amos for instance seemed well aware that the problem with poverty is not only, and maybe not even principally, a problem of hunger and need, but rather and maybe more importantly, of a distortion of human relationships: the original connectedness and relationality is disturbed and thus exclusion and not-belonging is the key problem. Jesus Christ himself showed concern for the excluded and marginalised, and was determined to include them in society as he did not hesitate to eat with them, forgive their sins, heal them, etc. Moreover, by his self-identification with those people (cf. Matt 25), he turned the encounter with the outcasts and the excluded into a *locus theologicus*, a place where we can encounter God. Justice is thus not only ensuring that people can lead dignified lives, but that a community arises in which people connect with each other and feel connected, in which they are concerned for each other, and in which relationships flourish.

The vision of a just society based on ‘right relationships’ according to Catholic tradition tends to translate into the concept of common good, ‘integral development’ (implying “*the development of the whole person and of every person*” (Paul VI, PP, 14) or ‘the good life for all’.<sup>37</sup> This good life for all has to be more than the sum of the welfare of all the individuals in a society; one’s personal well-being is inevitably connected with the well-being of others, even globally. Mutual flourishing is its benchmark. Moreover, it also concerns the good of the community itself, as a whole, *and* the relationships people share and which shape the community. Put differently: what is at stake for Christian ethics is a relational approach to justice as acquiring, developing, and fostering “relational goods” (Bruni, 2012, p. 88): it

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37 For an overview how this notion of ‘justice for all’ is understood in Catholic social thought, see my “How to Link Fullness of Life and Justice for All: Theological Explorations Inspired by Schillebeeckx and Lebret”, in E. Van Stichel, et al. (ed.), *Fullness of Life and Justice for All: Dominican Perspectives* (Adelaide: ATF Press 2020), pp. 95-114.

is about living together, creating and enabling reciprocity, mutuality, participation, and inclusion within and among communities. The public life itself is a common good, for it enables “*the realisation of the human capacity for intrinsically valuable relationships*” (Hollenbach, 2002, p. 81). Relationships are thus not merely a means to foster justice but are ends and goods in themselves. We nurture non-instrumental values which are only attained in our communal life and our interrelationships. Hence the question: in what way do our common day-to-day interactions create, foster, and sustain these relational goods and thus contribute to justice and the good life for all which envisions justice for all... with all... and among all.

This presents us with a number of challenges.

First, the benchmark for measuring the level of justice in a society is its treatment of the most vulnerable as the preferential option for the poor indicates. This justice is partial, as it chooses the side of the most vulnerable, not because God loves them more than others but because their welfare is most under threat. It requires awareness of how broken relationships (in the form of poverty, exclusion, marginalisation) affect people, how the erosion of their personal integrity can harm them more than the deprivation itself: “*The principle suffering [...] is not that they can't pay their rent on time but rather a toxic sense of shame – a global sense of failure of the whole self*” (as quoted in Pope, 2015, p. 153). In most of our societies, increasingly characterised by meritocratic thinking, people's problems such as poverty and marginalisation are treated as a personal failure and as isolated issues, which blinds us to the systemic and structural mechanisms – social sins – that cause them (cf. Sandel, 2020). As a consequence, our compassion is often conditional: only if misfortune cannot be traced back to personal guilt or omission, is help required. By contrast, biblical justice is unconditional: we do not have to prove that we are worthy of help; we simply are a member of the community and society should be constructed in such a way that its institutions, schemes of distribution, policies, etc. reflect this underlying and foundational assumption.

Second, these vulnerable people should not be treated as objects of assistance, but as subjects, which Gustavo Gutiérrez already pointed out five decades ago (Gutiérrez, 1971). There should be no *power over* but rather *power with* in order to empower and support participation, inclusion, and co-creation.

Lastly, this vision of a just society – or by extension a just world – involves not merely ensuring that everyone has the goods they need to lead a decent life. The goal is to create a community where people connect with each other and feel a sense of belonging. So how do we work together towards an inclusive society where everyone matters? Where mutual benefit allows every person to make their unique contribution and create the

community together? Important to notice is that it is not about inclusion as assimilation, as if the society is a fixed, unchangeable given to which people just have to adapt. Nor is it about shaping our common life and society as a hotel in which various groups are given their own space, in which to build their good life separately from each other, characterised by non-interference and possible indifference. It must be the “*house we build together*”.<sup>38</sup>

## (2) Peace

With regard to peace, one can distinguish a negative and a positive meaning (cf. Himes 2010, p. 268). While the negative perspective considers peace as the absence of war and violence, the positive perspective is much more demanding and harder to achieve because it is not sufficient to simply end violent conflicts. Its Christian, biblical definition entails that “*the conditions for the flourishing communal life [are] in place for all to enjoy*” (Himes, 2010, p. 268). This positive – political – peace is distinguishable from inner peace on the one hand and eschatological peace in the Kingdom of God on the other hand, and it is closely linked to Christianity’s relational justice. Its absence, for instance in situations of gross inequality and resentment, hardly surprisingly and at the very least understandably gives rise to a violent response. Pope Francis recently remarked this was “threatening the fabric of society” (Francis, 2020, FT, 168). Hence the idea: “*if you want peace, work for justice*” (Paul VI, 1972, WDP).<sup>39</sup>

Gradually CST has come to realise that even justice, supported by the call for solidarity, would not be sufficient. For even within a more fair and equal society, one might still lack the feeling of really belonging to the community. As Roger Charles claimed: “*Justice alone will not produce the needed social cohesion, solidarity; that comes only from the unitiva of society, charity*” (quoted in Himes, 2010, p. 273). Himes continues:

*What often prevents us our building a better society, a better international order, is not lack of data or strategies for action, but the visceral desire to pursue the good even at the expense of forsaking convenience and narrow self-interest* (Himes 2010, p. 273).

During his pontificate, John Paul II did not cease to emphasise the role of solidarity as “*a path to peace*”, as it

*helps us to see the “other” – whether a person, people or nation – not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited*

<sup>38</sup> The metaphor is taken from Stephen Pope who quotes Jeffrey Sachs in *A Step Along the Way*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>39</sup> A close look at the papal World Day of Peace Messages, shows how peace is considered to be a much broader category than merely the end of violence. Solving issues such as ecological concerns, development, human trafficking etc. are considered an indispensable aspect of sustainable peace.

*at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our “neighbour”, a “helper” (cf. Gen 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 39).*

Theological grounding for this solidarity is the recognition of other human beings as the ‘neighbour’, bearer of the image of God and thus children of God, which makes us aware of our “*common fatherhood (...) and the brotherhood of all in Christ*” (John Paul II, 1987, SRS, 40).

It is not a coincidence then that both Pope Benedict XVI and especially Pope Francis increasingly focused on the importance of fraternity.<sup>40</sup> In *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI distinguishes between reason and fraternity, seemingly implying that reason can make us aware of the principles of justice, fairness, and equality, but lacks the motivational aspect which is granted by fraternity as bestowed on us by God (cf. Benedict XVI, 2009, CV, 19). In his turn, as early as 2014, Francis proclaimed on the occasion of the World Day of Peace that “*fraternity extinguishes war*” and is the “*foundation and pathway to peace*” (Francis, 2014, WDP, 7). In his latest encyclical, which centres on fraternity in a time characterised by the physical virus of Covid-19 and the more hidden but equally destructive ‘viruses’ of ‘radical individualism’ and ‘racism’ (Francis 2020, FT, resp. 105 and 97), he considers fraternity the proverbial vaccine. Confronted with huge fragmentation, increasing nationalism, and the closing of borders and minds (enforced by digital communications), Pope Francis calls for a fraternity which does not merely consider others as ‘associates’ (resulting in a close group of likeminded and connected people) but as true neighbours (cf. Francis, 2020, FT, 101-104).

In this light, the notion of ‘the culture of encounter’ shows its importance as a way to foster such fraternity, a notion which from the beginning of his pontificate Pope Francis has not ceased to emphasise. Theological grounding for this encounter is our faith, which is “*an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus did: encountering others*”, as God is close to us seeking encounter (resp. Fares, 2015, p. 17 and 49). The source of this culture of encounter is thus to be found in God who “*by his closeness, by his accompaniment, creates a culture of encounter which makes us brothers, children and not just members of an NGO or proselytes of a multinational organisation.*” (Francis as quoted in Fares, 2015, p. 49) Hence the link with fraternity. Creating this culture of encounter, in which we seek out the other as our brothers and sisters who all belong to God, is believed to be a response to the ‘culture of conflict’, ‘of fragmentation’, ‘of waste’ and ‘of indifference’ (cf. Francis, 2013, VPC; Francis, 2013, FCE). Fostered by attitudes of openness, receptivity, and humility, such an encounter helps people to accept diversity, create relationships of belonging, and become willing to cooperate for the global common good which excludes no one.

<sup>40</sup> Note that in the latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis referred twice as much to fraternity as to solidarity, respectively 55 and 26 times.

This encounter is tied to our embodiment, as it should touch people and it does touch us. It holds a silent “*revolution of tenderness*” as we are called by the gospel to “*run the risk of face-to-face-encounter with others, with their physical presences which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy that infects us in our close and continuous interaction*” (Francis, 2013, EG, 88). It is thus direct and interpersonal. However, encounter transcends interpersonal relationships, so that as a ‘culture’ its implications are social, institutional and collective. As Mescher comments:

*Even though an encounter might be envisioned as taking place between two individuals, a culture of encounter implies a collective approach, a commitment shared by cultivating dispositions, which become habits, which become normative practices for community life* (Mescher, 2020, p. xvi).

It is also an ecclesial undertaking: rather than hiding behind its walls, the Church should risk being “bruised” and changed by the encounter with others which enriches its perspective and life (cf. Francis, 2013, EG, 49). Building bridges has political significance – a task of the Church at the service of politics as the word ‘Pontifex’ indicates; opening the doors in our closed minds is a political act (cf. Francis, 2018b, p. 11/13).

Understood in this way, the culture of encounter contributes to peace:

*Peace is a good that overcomes every barrier, because it belongs to all of humanity. (...) It is neither a culture of confrontation, nor a culture of conflict that builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace* (Francis, 2013, Angelus, 1 September 2013).

This is a task entrusted to everyone as we are all called to be an “*artisan of peace*”. Non-violence and “*just peace*” (Francis, 2018, p. 27) are key for Pope Francis, taking the increasing Catholic presumption against war to a next level.

In sum. Peace is not merely the absence of violence but implies a commitment to more justice grounded in fraternity. In a similar way non-violence is not merely refraining from violence but is actively promoting peace. It is not necessary to be directly involved in restoration, reconciliation, and peacebuilding after the appearance of violence, to work for long-term and sustainable peace. Even the smallest acts which aid to deconstruct the real, virtual, or mental walls, are a crucial step in the direction of this peace and to a world where “*God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of ‘them’ and ‘those’, but only ‘us’*” (Francis, 2020, FT, 35).

### (3) Sustainable development

Although the 'Club of Rome' predicted as early as the 1970s that we would face environmental disaster if we continued to pursue economic growth on the same scale globally, it took the world a few more decades to discover the truth of this prediction. The same is true for CST. From the 1960s onwards there were hints of a growing ecological awareness, but it took until the publication of the first social encyclical on ecology by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* in 2015 to really address the issue in a systematic and profound way. The ecological theme was hardly mentioned in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), the document on the relationship with the world by the Second Vatican Council; and where it did discuss the issue, it used an anthropocentric paradigm, upholding a biblical interpretation in which human beings are granted the task of 'dominion' over the earthly realm (cf. Massaro, 2018, p. 73). Quite visionary were the bishops who gathered in Rome in 1971 for a synod on global justice, when they critically assessed the limits of our planet:

*Such is the demand for resources and energy by the richer nations, (...) and such are the effects of dumping by them in the atmosphere and the sea that irreparable damage would be done to the essential elements of life on earth, such as air and water, if their high rates of consumption and pollution, which are constantly on the increase, were extended to the whole of humanity (Synod of Bishops, 1971, 11).*

Much later, John Paul II surprisingly chose the "ecological crisis" as the topic for his Message for the World Day of Peace in 1990, and argued that nature has its "own integrity", which was a first major shift away from a merely anthropocentric paradigm (John Paul II, 1990, PWG). In the same vein, he expressed his concern in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* in which he criticised the destruction of the environment (John Paul II, 1991, CA, 37). Pope Benedict XVI expressed similar theoretical insights, writing an entire section on the topic in *Caritas in Veritate* (Benedict XVI, 2009, CV, 48-51), and made practical decisions as well – he even acquired the nickname 'the Green Pope'. Some argue he paved the way for the in-depth analysis and topical elaboration by his successor Francis (cf. Massaro, 2018, p. 75-76; Ngolele, 2019, p. 173-174).

In this "groundbreaking" (Massaro, 2018, p. 70) document, the title *Laudato Si'* immediately sets the tone: Praise to you, God. It leads with the joy and wonder of the mystery of nature, which presents itself as a gift to us. Describing creation as 'our common home', which we share in common but also of which we as human beings are an integral part, indicates a fundamentally different viewpoint than the technological or economic views which introduced a distinction – and thus distance – between nature and humankind, between object and subject, and which frame what happens in nature as a problem human beings must confront. A similar

perspective used to characterise earlier Catholic social teaching, when popes distinguished human ecology and natural ecology (cf. Dorr, 2016, p. 422), based on the anthropocentrism of dominion over and mastering of nature, separating nature from society, “*perhaps in the interest of underlining the uniqueness of humankind among all other creatures of God*” (Massaro, 2018, p. 80). While the foregoing presumed a gap that must be bridged, Francis advances the idea of connectedness and interconnectedness as well as the intrinsic value of nonhuman creatures (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 33).

Starting from the wonder and awe for creation does not imply that Pope Francis is blind to the challenges we face. Inspired and informed by scientific and political findings, he is clearly aware of the impact and urgency of issues such as pollution and climate change, (lack of access to) water, loss of biodiversity, etc. However, he is critical of the idea that science and technology will solve everything (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 102 ff). The problem is in fact more fundamental, namely a distorted view of our relationship with nature. The crisis is both practical and moral. A new perspective forces itself upon us.

Pope Francis summarises his vision in the term “integral ecology”, thereby enriching the notion of ‘sustainable development’ which is commonly used as an alternative for the current situation and CST’s notion of ‘integral development’.<sup>41</sup> In a first sense, integral ecology means that concern for the environment on the one hand and commitment to more inclusion to fight poverty and inequality on the other hand are in fact two sides of the same coin:

*We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature* (Francis, 2015, LS, 139).

The environment on the one hand, and the most vulnerable people on our planet on the other, are both victims of a wasteful and disposable society. The most vulnerable are the first to suffer from the effects of climate change and the ecological crisis as they are confronted with health problems due to pollution, forced migration pushed by ecological degradation, the already noticeable effects of climate change in the South, the privatisation of water, etc.

A closer look shows how integral ecology also expresses a deeper – theological – vision, particularly a relational vision in which everything is interconnected and interdependent. What this means for our interhuman relationships has already been made clear in the

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<sup>41</sup> Note that while Pope Francis uses ‘sustainable development’ 4 times, and ‘integral development’ as well, he refers 9 times to ‘integral ecology’.

discussion on relational justice above. *Laudato Si'* extends this perspective: the fate of human beings and the rest of creation is connected – which is not a negative thing or a cause for fear, but rather something positive. Together with one another and in relationship with creation, our life is more beautiful and valuable than alone. For it is not just human beings, but all creatures that show something of the greatness and goodness of God and have value within themselves – a clear departure from the anthropocentric conceptualisation (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 69). Or in Francis' words:

*When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it* (Francis, 2015, LS, 139).

The underlying assumption can be summarised as follows, according to the Dutch theologian Erik Borgman: *“People are not only relational among themselves. They are part of a relational universe”* (Borgman, 2017, p. 93).

Through ‘contemplation’, our awareness of this interconnectedness and the discovery of God in all things can grow. Contemplation implies a specific way of looking. Do we look at nature as an object that we may use or misuse for our own needs and desires? Or do we look with an *“awe-filled contemplation”* (Francis, 2015, LS, 125), a gaze that takes that relational perspective, that connectedness of all creation as its starting point? Contemplation will also help us to see the traces of God's presence in the midst of these crises. Pope Francis describes the condition of the earth today as the whole creation *“groaning in travail”* and suffering (Rom 8:22; Francis, 2015, LS, 80). For the pope, the environmental issue is like a sign of the times, requiring sharp analysis in the light of the Gospel. Though the situation is serious, it is not hopeless and we should not start to panic and doom-monger, but rather trust in God's nearness (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 12), as a veto against the degradation of the environment by humankind and as the source of our hope.

However, Francis' call for contemplation does not imply that we should just be passive, contemplative bystanders. On the contrary: God may be with us, but that should not make us close our eyes to the current challenges. We must participate in the change that is urgently needed, as the ecological crisis is at its roots a moral problem. Hence Francis' idea of the need for an *“ecological conversion”* (Francis, 2015, LS, 217), which is a universal call, because non-Christians also realise that we must turn the tide. This ecological conversion is therefore practical and concrete, according to Francis, and it is at the same time structural and personal. Structural, because it requires economic, political, social, and cultural institutional changes, which take ecology into account as well and not just the market, profit, and self-

interest (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 109). Personal, because all of us must seek a new lifestyle that is more sustainable and inclusive. Although individual efforts are needed, this conversion must also be a communal task: “*a community conversion*” is required: “*Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds,*” Francis clarifies (Francis, 2015, LS, 219). If the ecological crisis shows us anything at all, it is the fact that the realisation of the good life is interdependent: it will be the good life for all, or for none. Fundamentally what is needed, is a ‘*culture of care*’ (Francis, 2015, LS, 231).

What will sustain the development of this culture of care? Merely doctrines and principles will not suffice. What is necessary is a spirituality that nourishes the contemplative gaze so that we continue to be aware of that connectedness with everyone and everything (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 216). Even more importantly, Francis has understood well that spirituality can help one stay motivated to work for change, despite setbacks, doom and gloom. Burnout is a serious problem among activists: after all, what are the sources of our continuing motivation and hope to stay committed? Spirituality, in whatever form, which considers the interconnectedness between people and the environment, can help to keep one’s spirits up. Supported by awe, wonder, joy, and gratitude, Francis sees very clearly, Donal Dorr argues, how contemplated love is necessary as it “*will inspire and impel us to change our ecological behaviour, whereas guilt is a poor motivator – it often causes us to bury our heads in the sand*” (Dorr, 2016, p. 420). The challenges are huge, but despite the visible and widely held indifference, Pope Francis has faith in the fact that we are “*always capable of going out of ourselves toward the other*” (Francis, 2015, LS, 208). With his timely encyclical, Pope Francis broadened the scope of the Church’s social mission, arguing that ecology and sustainable development are also an indispensable part of it.

### 3. Implications for service learning

As a starting point for the reflection on the implications of CST on service learning, I depart from the description as used by my institution, the KU Leuven (Catholic University Leuven, in Belgium) which states the following:

*Service-learning (sic) is an **educational approach** in which the central concepts are ‘**servicing**’, ‘**reflecting**’ and ‘**learning**’. Students serve society by engaging themselves to a specific community. Meanwhile, they reflect in a structured and critical way on their experiences. In this way, they learn on an academic, civic, and personal level. Service-learning supports the development of students as ‘**whole persons**’ who have not only acquired academic skills, but also social and personal competences. Furthermore, service-learning helps them to become **responsible and critical citizens** (KU Leuven, 2020).*

If this is the goal we envision, what are the implications of the Church's call for justice, peace, and sustainable development for service learning? In other words: how does service learning contribute to the achievement of those goals?

When service learning is put into practice, charity and justice are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, they can complement each other – as the distinction between indirect and direct service learning indicates – as long as any gap between them is always bridged. Direct service learning will often occur when focusing on directly meeting the needs of people in charitable ways, thus tackling the symptoms of social ills (e.g. volunteering in soup kitchens, refugee camps, care homes, etc.). Indirect service learning will be more suitable when working towards justice through projects which aim to offer sustainable solutions for social ills. Both have value in their own right. A lot will depend on the attitude with which the service learning is executed, as well as on the reflection before, during, and after the experience (in order to foster a holistic understanding of the problem, so that one can see beyond the immediate needs and understand the role of social structures and mechanisms which triggered people to look for direct help in meeting their needs).

The importance of charity and direct service learning should not be underestimated. There is a distinct advantage to providing direct assistance because having a close connection to whomever one has committed to serve, makes it immediately clear who is the most vulnerable, who is falling through the structural or institutional cracks. That is why many forms of charity have an important signalling function, signalling what is going wrong in our societies. Secondly, even in direct service learning, service is never a unidirectional one-way street, never an exercise where the “'haves' help the 'have-nots'” (Pope, 2015, p. 193). Relational reciprocity is fundamental, based on the premise that all can inspire, challenge, discover, ... each other. Whatever the circumstances

*Whatever the circumstances and form of service learning, any experience provides the opportunity to sample a new way of learning from each other, or even better: with each other.*

and form of service learning, any experience provides the opportunity to sample a new way of learning from each other, or even better: *with* each other.

On the other hand, institutions and organisations are not communities. It is important to consider how to commit to justice while making the vulnerable stakeholders visible. Sometimes, it is easier to show solidarity to distant people one never actually meets than to a pesky homeless person that bothers you on the way from home to your work. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur makes an illuminating distinction between the 'neighbour' and the 'socius' (Ricoeur, 1965, p. 103ff). Neighbours are those we meet face-to-face, those we are connected to in a direct way, who we know very well. A socius is

someone we know via structural relationships, but they remain anonymous. Think for instance of all those fellow citizens we share political institutions and a social security system with: we do not know them directly, but we are connected through those systems so that paying my taxes fairly has an effect on those unknown others. The risk of those institutional connections is, however, that these persons become invisible and anonymous 'on' (them) to us, presenting us with the challenge of breaking through this anonymity to see 'le chacun' (literally: the 'each', namely the individual and unique person behind and affected by structures and institutions). How can we shape institutions with room for love and commitment, especially towards the most vulnerable in our societies and in the world at large? How do we make sure the invisible *chacun* does not escape our attention to become merely 'on'? And how do we become aware of all the important effects we have on people, even if we do not see them directly? How can we foster motivation and care for cold solidarity and justice? Lastly, if justice is relational, the question for service learning should be: which relationships do we develop? Which relationships would contribute to improving our service – close and distant, visible and invisible?

With regard to sustainable development, the crises we face are both practical and moral. Service-learning projects could be developed in order to meet the practical demands of the crisis that challenge students to think about how their scientific, technical, and technological expertise can contribute to solving a part of the problem – taking into account both the social and ecological aspect, the integral and sustainable development of both the natural world and human beings. It is essential not to forget the impact of certain evolutions on the most vulnerable global citizens. What are for instance adequate, concrete, practical, and pragmatic solutions to safeguard sustainable food security for all, sustainable housing, etc.

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Service learning is also well-suited to tackle the moral challenge of the ecological crisis and can contribute to the much-needed 'ecological conversion'. SL takes place as a service within society, it is an expression and embodiment of the call to form 'community networks' to enhance this

kind of conversion. At a more fundamental level, service learning is not only about the service experience, but also about the reflection which offers a perfect opportunity to reflect on the broader world view and paradigms underlying our current treatment of

nature and its resulting utilitarianism, individualism, consumerism, and competition. (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 210). To truly bring about sustainable change and create an “*ecological citizenship*”, it is not enough to merely provide information; we also need to install good habits so that through small daily actions our lifestyles will change. This will directly but also indirectly, without us even being conscious of it, affect the world around us. (cf. Francis, 2015, LS, 211/212). At a deeper level, this reflection can foster an awareness and integration of one’s personal spirituality and world view: what is my particular calling and my task in this work? What are the sources of my motivation? What are my desires and dreams, but also my fears? Service learning offers, through its pillar of reflection, an opportunity for contemplation in practice, enriched and grounded in the experience of concrete service. As such, this ecological education goal can help people “*to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care*” (Francis, 2015, LS, 210).

Although students engaged in service learning might not be directly involved in peacebuilding, restoration and reconciliation, we could argue that whatever service-learning activities they engage in that encourage them to collaborate and co-create in order to foster communities that promote integral development, integral ecology, and fraternity, can be considered to be peacebuilding. Every time service learning challenges students to go to the margins, get out their comfort zone, encounter people and concerns they might otherwise never encounter, we are fostering mutual understanding, dialogue and thus – in the end – peace. If in our all too often fragmented, polarised, and conflictual communities, “*social separation [appears as] a sin (a failure to love God by loving our neighbour) then redemption lies in encounter* (Mescher, 2020, p. xiii).

At a personal level, service learning confronts students with at least a triple challenge. First, a prerequisite for true openness to the vulnerable is being able to confront one’s own vulnerability. For some, this will entail coming to terms with their vulnerability as belonging to the social group that service learning aims to work for; they are themselves the ‘vulnerable’. For others, their vulnerability is somewhat more abstract. To be prepared to ‘willingly experience the chaos of others’, means to face your own vulnerability to get a true sense of how people are affected (both physically and emotionally). The encounters fostered in service learning will be an opportunity for students to broaden their horizons through experience, to become more conscious of their own vulnerability and more empathic towards the vulnerability of others. A second and related requirement is the ability to critically observe and consequently confront one’s social position and the privileges that position may entail. In other words, it is important for students to become aware of their own privileged position, which gives them the tools to deal with their own vulnerability while at the same time increasing the vulnerability of others. In her insightful analysis, American theologian Elisabeth O’Donnell Gandolfo explains the underlying

dynamics of these processes (O'Donnell Gandolfo, 2015). The starting point is our natural reflex to react to our human vulnerabilities with fear and how, led by fear, we seek to protect ourselves. However, this often leads to a situation where some people have the privilege of being able to shield themselves from their own vulnerabilities, at the expense of the well-being of others. The prime example being the closing or protecting of our national or community borders. But a similar phenomenon exists *within* our society. This should lead us to question how our own lifestyle, how the social position we hold, may be compounding the vulnerability of others and contributing to their adverse situation. Moreover, it is crucial to uncover the structural, institutional, and systemic character of these dynamics: how do our societies both internally and externally take measures and implement policies which safeguard the well-being of some, thus granting them privileges, at the cost of adding to the vulnerabilities of others, thus installing 'social sins'? What action should we then take? The key issue is not to determine whether or not we are privileged, but which choices to follow up with: we can comfortably take credit for those privileges – possibly leading to fatalism and indifference – or we can commit to proactive social transformation by deliberately confronting our privilege.

Finally, these encounters and insights challenge young people to envision societal change and consider their future role herein. Following Hannah Arendt, our education is not geared to reproduce what already exists or to change the world only according to a preordained schedule. Instead, it is intended to give young people insights into themselves and the world, giving them the tools to shape it for themselves, to create the future in an original way, using the legacy that was passed on to them to understand and grasp the world. At the same they are aided by the unexpected along the way – arising from their meetings with others on the same journey who also wish to contribute (cf. Arendt as elaborated in Borgman, 2017 pp. 190-191). Such education will do what education is supposed to do, namely *"fostering one's longing to make the world, together with others, a place where living a flourishing, fulfilling life is better possible than it is now"* (Borgman, 2017, 191).

I would hope service learning can move students from possible indifference to increased indignation, with an "open yes" to envision another future (Schillebeeckx, 2018, 5-6). I would love to broaden their scope, by considering how both our rationality and our emotions inform our reason, so that students can learn to experience and trust their emotions as that which literally moves them to act. And moves them beyond the confines of their comfort zones, to feel engaged with people, situations, and social problems that they may have initially thought were none of their concern. I have faith that if service learning is able to both give students the insights in the particular Christian understanding of justice, peace, and sustainable development and make them hear the call for a personal response in their future life, it will become an important way to contribute to the *"educational challenge"* we face today (cf.

Francis, 2015, LS, 210) as “*integral education seeks to shape more enlightened and responsible ways of thinking, feeling and behaving*” (Dorr, 2016, p. 429).

## Conclusion

With this chapter, I hope I have clarified *why* service learning is a crucial element of the Catholic identity of Catholic higher education and *how* it can be implemented in order to respond to the Church’s call to justice, sustainable development, and peace.

To conclude, I would like to share one of my favourite theological quotes by the political theologian Johann Baptist Metz, who wrote in his *Faith in History and Society*:

*The much discussed identity crisis of Christianity is not primarily a crisis of its message, but rather a crisis of its subjects and institutions which have pulled back all too far from the inevitable practical meaning of its message and in so doing have undercut its intelligible power* (Metz, 2007, xi).

Given the above, I believe it to be self-evident that service learning is not only essential to revealing this ‘inevitable practical meaning’ of the Christian message, but also to further embody, shape, and develop it.

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## 9. GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: FROM IDEAL FRATERNITY TO LIVED PRO-SOCIALITY

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### Abstract

The aim of this work is to present a reflection on the essential value of Service-learning in the Scholas educational program, which harmoniously integrates the cognitive, affective and behavioural areas. The change of time and the crisis in current education require promoting a new educational paradigm, committed to global citizenship and the transformation of reality. Faced with a liquid and confused society, with fragile links, the Scholas Occurrentes project arises, whose mission is to make a change in education based on the culture of encounter. Welcoming plurality and diversity is essential for universal brotherhood. Social, cultural and religious difference is valued as a source of wealth for integral education. This educational intuition of Pope Francis rejects utilitarian and elitist criteria that rule out the most vulnerable or the different. Unconditional acceptance, inclusive education and dialogue are signs of identity. But also didactics, understood as the place of encounter between educators and students. For Scholas, university and school make sense if they are no longer self-referential and go out to the peripheries. Service-learning methodology is the ideal model to build that bridge between what is thought and what has been lived, between theory and practice, and between university and society. Young people, from an outgoing experience, learn by serving and acting on the reality they want to transform. But, at the same time, that reality transforms students to be the engine of social change. Breaking down prejudices and standards, adjusting expectations, growing emotionally and reinforcing prosocial values are Service-learning strong points as a hallmark for a global citizen education typical of the Scholas Occurrentes project.

### 1. Introduction

We are living a time of global crisis characterized by the loss of basic certainties, uprooting, depersonalization and discontinuity. The roots of memory and tradition have been forgotten. Technological advances affect social, cultural and communication changes; current economy affects the labour market, consumption and social differences; the development model affects the environment; and the change in the social structure

affects the human being and its relationships. There prevails feeling, image, immediacy, uncertainty, indifference and the law of the strongest.

Modern society, rooted in secularization and moral relativism, places the human being before a restless humanity. The way of building liquid links and understanding reality has a bearing on the processes of construction of personal and collective identity. The Pope echoes this scenario stating that:

*In today's world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia. What reigns instead is a cool, comfortable and globalized indifference... (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 30).*

This situation also affects the educational system and our young people. Digitization is growing dramatically in recent decades and giving rise to new ways of communication. Everything seems to indicate that in a world in which technological development predominates, aspects such as communication, encounters and inclusion would be strengthened. However, the differences are becoming more pressing and the throwaway society is gaining ground even in educational institutions.

Specifically, the role of technology in times of pandemic has been relevant, since lifestyles have been significantly modified by teleworking, teleconsumption, distance leisure and even online teaching. All these contributions become a double-edged sword that affects our young people. On the one hand, there is no doubt about the benefits of technology to facilitate communication, but on the other hand, the digital divide is increasing along with the danger of addictions and dependencies. In this sense, the Pope affirms that:

*Social networks can facilitate relationships and promote the good of society, but they can also lead to further polarization and division between individuals and groups. The digital world is a public square, a meeting-place where we can either encourage or demean one another, engage in a meaningful discussion or unfair attacks.<sup>42</sup>*

There are multiple challenges that technology poses at the socio-educational level. Many of them especially affect the ways of establishing interpersonal and communicative relationships in today's society.

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42 Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for the 50th World Communications Day (2016).

## 2. Communication in a globalized and virtual world

Digitization allows young people to communicate more fluently, improving their level of socialization, especially those who have less social skills to establish interpersonal relationships physically. In the networks they feel accepted, recognized and can express themselves in a simple way. Thus, *“The internet, in particular, offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God.”*<sup>43</sup>

This new way of communicating breaks down physical walls. Introducing digital skills in a globalized world implies a relevant change in the concepts of citizenship and social justice. The use of technologies is not neutral and global digitization cannot be identified with global justice. But the problem is not whether technology is good or bad. Making a reflection or a judgement about it is still a simplistic statement. Rather, the question or reflection is more about how we are going to create spaces that humanize the digital world of our young people and that are potential for encounter and inclusion. As Domingo affirms:

*Globalization has transformed the way to exercise their responsibilities as citizens, and thus, civic identity is considered in a more complex way, paying attention to factors that have to do not only with the political community to which one belongs, but with the ethical, cultural or religious community of which one feels part.* (Domingo, 2017, p.122).

We must bear in mind the risks or limitations of a virtual world. The excess of information and overstimulation, as a result of technological and digital development, influences the analytical ability to think. The communicational process paradoxically loses strength because, although it is immediate, there is a physical distancing that directly affects non-verbal communication. It is complex to distinguish emotions and feelings through the screen. On the one hand, the digital environment allows all young people to be connected twenty-four hours a day; but on the other hand, digital access is causing inequalities that mainly affect anthropological categories supported by the culture of encounter and care. The Pope reminds us that: *“The subject of this culture is the people, not simply one part of society that would pacify the rest with the help of professional and media resources”* (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 216). In this way, the “you”, the neighbour and the sense of belonging to the community are displaced. As Han says: *“The days of the other are over. The other as a mystery, the other as seduction, the other as Eros, the other as desire, the other as hell, the other as pain are disappearing”* (Han, 2019, p.21)<sup>44</sup>. Hyperconnection and excess of communication affect the piling up of “friends,” but not based on the relationships caused by the encounter.

43 Message of Pope Francis for the 48th World Communications Day (2014) Communication at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter.

44 Own translation.

Technology reveals the intimacy and privacy of the person, but at the same time it is an incorporeal communication. Direct contact with the other is lost. We do not see the body, and we partially see the face because facial expressions are not properly captured. It is true that in hyperconnection there is no distance, but it lacks the mystery that the encounter produces. Poor perception, look (Han, 2014) and voice abilities affect the way in which people interact and communicate. *“Narrative becomes considerably less important. Today everything is numerable in order to be transformed into the language of performance and efficiency. Therefore, everything that cannot be counted numerically does not exist.”* (Han, 2014, p. 42)<sup>45</sup>. Even the anonymity originated in this area has a negative impact on personalization.

In addition, communicational processes on the Internet affect the capacity to accept unconditionally because there is no active listening that involves a corporal aspect. In digitization, you do not listen with your whole body, reducing it to a mere exchange of information. This lack of active listening affects the establishment of bonds and trust produced by a real encounter. And as the Pope says, identity processes are affected:

*Social network communities... often they remain simply groups of individuals who recognize one another through common interests or concerns characterized by weak bonds. Moreover, in the social web identity is too often based on opposition to the other, the person outside the group: we define ourselves starting with what divides us rather than with what unites us, giving rise to suspicion and to the venting of every kind of prejudice (ethnic, sexual, religious and other)<sup>46</sup>.*

Digital spaces are real, but they do not contribute to develop the human fullness because they ignore elements that belong to the person itself. In this context, it can be said that young people are particularly vulnerable. Internet influences your mood, shapes your thinking, and can even create conflict in your interpersonal and family relationships.

We are, as Bauman says, before an atomization caused by a liquid society where even the links are fragile. *“The modern liquid society is that one where conditions of action of its members change before the behaviours can be consolidated in certain habits and in a routine.”* (Bauman, 2017, p.9)<sup>47</sup>. The problem of meaning and encounter as anthropological categories is questioned. Considering this change of era, where the crisis in current education and the fragmentation of knowledge predominate, it is urgent to promote a new educational paradigm that humanizes virtual communication styles and is committed to global citizenship and the transformation of reality.

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45 Own translation.

46 Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for the 53rd World Communications Day. 2019.

47 Own translation.

### 3. Some challenges of the transformation of education in the 21st century

*The way to build solid bridges between school/university and society is to embrace educational methodologies that address the needs of a global citizenship, capable of serving diversity as a source of wealth for integral education and promoting universal brotherhood.*

The analysis of the educational change in the 21st century involves developing a deep reflection about the elements of traditional education. This process affects the university and the methods applied in the classroom. Plurality

and social, cultural and religious diversity are also present in our universities. The way to build solid bridges between school/university and society is to embrace educational methodologies that address the needs of a global citizenship, capable of serving diversity as a source of wealth for integral education and promoting universal brotherhood.

The polyhedron that Pope Francis uses in his last encyclical to clarify the meaning of living in a universal and heterogeneous world is a significant image:

*The image of a polyhedron can represent a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations. Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable. This also means finding ways to include those on the peripheries of life (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 215).*

Higher Education Institutions are called to foster dialogue with the world of culture, thinking in terms of community and social friendship. Highlighting the importance of universality entails a broad perspective that do not favour homogeneous aspects, typical of the dominant culture, but that have an impact on small and specific issues; that keep in mind the local context, but from a global perspective. Catholic Universities, which are not alien to social, cultural and political problems, must make a deep discernment encouraging the construction of a culture of communion, developing a sense of service to the community and understanding the place of man in the world. The current world shortens the distance between us, we can all communicate immediately, although we are separated by a long distance. In this sense, it is true that *“as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers.”* (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 12). Taking care of the surrounding world is taking care of ourselves.

*“As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers.”*

It is important to respond to the call to build a civilization of love and a culture of life, generating actions empowering young people to transform society. For this reason, it is necessary to build bridges with the culture of current society; generate spaces of fraternal responsibility, spaces for listening, for holding a real dialogue with the different cultural forms that help promote a “cultural pact” (Pope Francis, 2020), welcoming and respecting the

*Promote a “cultural pact”, welcoming and respecting the different worldviews that coexist in our society; strengthen their public presence, developing classrooms experiences of educational innovation “which goes forth.”*

different worldviews that co-exist in our society; strengthen their public presence, developing classrooms experiences of educational innovation “which goes forth.” (Pope Francis, 2013, EG); and promoting a culture of encounter that regain the concept of individual person, its dignity and relational character through intergenerational cultural initiatives and favouring transdisciplinarity (Pope Francis, 2017) and the integration of knowledge. As the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* indicates:

*“(…) university scholars will be engaged in a constant effort to determine the relative place and meaning of each of the various disciplines within the context of a vision of the human person and the world that is enlightened by the Gospel (…)”* (John Paul II, 1990, ECE, 16).

Hence the urgency of developing networks that integrate different knowledge and disciplines. Networks are a place of encounter and dialogue that unite students and educators in a life project in order to promote the civic and Christian dimension. Fares invites us to value the true meaning of otherness:

*When you recover otherness in the encounter, you begin to establish a dialogue, and dialogue involves not only hearing, but also listening. Recover that ability to listen. The other, although ideologically, politically or socially different, he/she will always have something good to give you and me something good to give in turn. (Fares, 2014, 51)<sup>48</sup>.*

For a Catholic University, the category of “service” is essential and is part of its mission to both the Church and society. We cannot regard a university unable to respond to the current needs of society. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* says:

48 Own translation.

“The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic University, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students” (John Paul II, 1990, ECE, 34).

*We cannot regard a university unable to respond to the current needs of society.*

For that reason, integrating teaching-learning projects supported by service means

drawing up a fully coherent educational itinerary with comprehensive implications for students. We must bet on a consistent, solid and open education, forging a path that is not directed only to the final scores of a course, to mere productivity, or to the competitiveness typical of commercialized societies.

In this society with a strong cultural confrontation, a diversity of worldviews and anthropological conceptions, and a strong controversy regarding the purposes of education, educators need supporting instruments, channels that promote exchange and reflection, and strengthening the experience of the community support to their mission. Their task transcends their own curriculum demands, since they must not only elaborate a good program, deliver quality instruction or testing fairly.

The vocational dimension that defines the teaching staff of a Catholic University implies a direct interpellation to the meaning of the teaching activity itself, that is, to know why we educate and from which perspective: that of the individual, the world and the reality. The educational task must be shaped both at the identity and community level.

Today our centres run the risk of acritically responding to the demands for educational quality established by today's society and based mainly on the quality systems of a cognitive capitalism that causes division. The perverse system mechanisms promoted by the current knowledge society can produce individualistic and throwaway dynamics among educators, together with a lack of team awareness and weak identity bonding.

Educating in excellence implies that educators accept their mission, considering it as a ministry of hope and service that involves accompanying students in the art of living. A meaningless life, a life without transcendence and without love, is incomprehensible. We are called to discover and enhance the best in our students. They need a quality teaching that cannot be understood without promoting excellence in virtue and personal vocation.

One of the great challenges of the 21st century education is to personally guide and accompany students. Educating involves being bold and creative, but also being

magnanimous to discern and thus being able to take a balanced step between the cornice of safety and the zone of risk, as Pope Francis explained in his address to the students of the Jesuit schools of Italy and Albania in 2013.

In the classroom, the strong and the fast ones are rewarded, and the weak and the slow ones are despised. Educators must encourage an education based on testimony, coherence and the humanization of processes. Being a witness involves challenge, motivation, accompaniment and growth. It also means paying special attention to the classroom and the institution environment, the attitudes it assumes and promotes, and the style of relationships conceived from gratuity, care and generosity.

*It is possible to propose students with pedagogical paths of thought and action that contribute to their growth in solidarity, commitment, dialogue, respect, responsibility and care, and have common good, dignity and universal fraternity at their core.*

For this reason, it is of great interest to foster constant teacher-training so that, while maintaining their professionalism, they develop fundamental capacities that allow them to provide personalized guidance to students such as acceptance, listening, empathy, trust, understanding, etc.

In this way, it is possible to propose students with pedagogical paths of thought and action that contribute to their growth in solidarity, commitment, dialogue, respect, responsibility and care, and have common good, dignity and universal fraternity at their core.

#### 4. An educational change for a global citizenship

There is a relationship between anthropology and citizenship. Our conception or idea about human beings affects where we are and what we do in society. The question is to ask ourselves whether the anthropological vision is harmoniously integrated into current citizenship. The interaction between both categories significantly affects the educational system because the educational institution cannot remain outside society.

The information and technology society involves fast adaptation to changes. But more information does not mean more knowledge or more wisdom. The local citizenship model promoted a traditional school and university. This was characterized by a unidirectional model where educators were the ones who handled the flow of information and knowledge for students because the most important thing was knowledge acquisition. In this way,

students adopted a passive role and the differences between them became worse. Those who did not have the capacity to attain such knowledge were excluded by the system itself. Thus, the concept of education and person was reduced to mere utilitarian and chrematistic criteria. Only those who had the capacity and intelligence for this teaching-learning model would attain professional and social achievement. The educational system, therefore, was in charge of strengthening certain student capacities, thus ignoring their integral growth. In this way, didactic and educational innovation processes were also negatively affected. We thus have a local citizenship and a traditional school/university.

But over time, classrooms are becoming more and more heterogeneous. Not only do students have different abilities, but they also come from different cultures and religions. School is the reflection of a global society. This new vision affects educational institutions. Living in a global citizenship implies being aware of your own and specific problems. Dealing with new interpersonal relationships that are subject to change due to technological and information development.

A global citizenship needs a global education. The traditional education paradigm is no longer useful, but students need to be educated to develop a way of thinking and an overall reflective capacity, that is, one that considers sociocultural and religious plurality. It is not just acquiring concepts, but educating sensitivity, knowledge and behaviour. There is an urgent need for an education that encompasses the person in all their intrapersonal, interpersonal, existential and transcendent dimensions. Thus, an educational centre that responds to current times focuses on the comprehensive care of students. Solidarity, wisdom and knowledge are essential. Educating for global citizenship is educating for hope and discernment (Domingo, 2002).

*Educating for global citizenship is educating for hope and discernment.*

It is essential to encourage all of us to acquire full citizenship despite our differences, and this requires

respect and responsibility. Educating in respect implies teaching students to coexist in multicultural societies. This means sharing from dialogue, accepting the identities of each culture that coexist in the present world. But it also means educating in unconditional acceptance. It is not possible to welcome others without eliminating prejudices and dogmatic attitudes that avoid perceiving the other at a superior level. Perceiving the other with the same dignity is the first step towards respect. It is opening our eyes to new cultural spaces beyond borders. Respect implies an attitude of responsibility and commitment to an open and universal society.

Responsibility is meaningless without the presence of the others. *“Stating a responsibility is to justify human relationships in terms of training and empowerment, that is, in terms of skills, maturity, creativity, authenticity, sincerity, and, ultimately, personalization. To atomize is to individualize, to personalize is to train”* (Domingo, 2002, p. 38)<sup>49</sup>. Educating in responsibility is educating to strengthen the community. A sense of responsibility cannot be developed without the presence of the other, without encounter. And this attitude necessarily involves recognizing the other not as a “partner”, but as a “neighbour.” Paradoxically, the relational nature of the other strengthens my identity. Communion, bond, fraternity and communication emerge from the proximity with the other. *“The human person, with his or her inalienable rights, is by nature open to relationship. Implanted deep within us is the call to transcend ourselves through an encounter with others.”* (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 111). The virtues, values and attitudes are developed from the openness and union with other people. It is about educating for a responsibility that is retrospective, respective or relational and prospective (Domingo, 2017), and encompasses past, present and future. It is key to understanding the human being comprehensively and with full dignity. It is then when the boundaries in the relationship between *the I* and the *you* are set; whose path is social friendship as a condition of universal openness.

## 5. The Scholas Occurrentes educational project

The Scholas Occurrentes project was born in 2001 as a result of an educational intuition of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires (today Pope Francis). It arises in a complex social, cultural and political crisis with the desire to provide greater social participation and public training to young people. This action started with two projects: “Schools of neighbours” and “Sibling Schools.” These consisted of bringing young people together from different schools, religions, cultures and socioeconomic positions in order to develop their civic citizenship. Through the “Design Thinking” methodology based on the Stanford school model, young people detected the problems they were most concerned with in order to carry out research-reflection-action work. They discovered conflictive social situations as opportunities to address. After consensually selecting the topic they were most interested in, they carried out their research. The objective was to propose real and concrete solutions that could be passed on to the competent bodies and even follow up on the achievements. This process enabled them to make progress towards the concept of social friendship, by integrating diversity from the culture of encounter. It was thus conceived as a great educational potential for building a fraternal and peaceful world. The school also had an impact on society, and young people learned in a different way, as leaders of their own teaching-learning process and actively taking part in society.

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49 Own translation.

These proposals were strengthened with various similar educational experiences. The bridge between educational institution and society was a reality. When Bergoglio was elected Pope, he embraced the project and gave it an international character in 2013, constituting it as a Pontifical Foundation, so that it could reach all corners of the world. A new understanding of education, learning, the role of educators and young people in society acquired some relevance. It was the beginning of realizing the importance of changing education to change the world.

In this way, the challenge now is to humanize education, placing the person at the centre of the educational process and accepting the implications of this process at a personal and community level. Scholas mission is to generate a change in the current educational paradigm, where the most fragile or vulnerable are excluded and discarded due to a predominant instructional model based above all on the acquisition of knowledge related to specific subjects. But this change must be for all educational communities and integrate even those with fewer resources. The key is to create meeting-places based on unconditional acceptance, inclusive

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education and dialogue as signs of identity. There is no room for utilitarian and elitist criteria that promote selfreferentiality. Scholas implies an educational model that supposes decentration and commitment to social justice. This change is structural and organizational, including the social, political, cultural and educational dimensions. However, it is also a personal

change for all educational stakeholders and for all the elements that affect the education of our children and young people.

Highlighting the importance of art, sports, games and technology means reinforcing a pedagogy typical of a classroom without walls. There are various Scholas educational proposals to address global citizenship. One of them is the recently created University of Meaning. The objective is to develop civic and transcendent attitudes to take part in society, having common good and human dignity at its core. This University relies on educating in soft skills such as empathy, emotional intelligence and active listening as axes to promote behaviours related to social engagement, social justice, responsibility, solidarity and respect. It is an educational and training reality for a global citizenship

that integrates the intergenerational, interreligious and intercultural dimensions respectively.

*There are various Scholas educational proposals to address global citizenship. One of them is the recently created University of Meaning.*

Scholas programmes seek prosocial educational experiences that unite head, heart and hands as a path of “integrality,” as a *laudato*

horizon that ensures the integral care of creation. One challenge is to build a civilization of love based on universal fraternity and highlighting the leading role of young people. They are part of the current society. The pedagogical keys point towards didactics that connect with reality, experience, encounter and beauty.

Currently, Scholas is a network of networks that is present in five continents and includes over 500,000 educational institutions. The most relevant contributions are:

- ▶ Educating in the culture of encounter. Pope Francis proposes in his address *Meeting with the Academic and Cultural World* (Pope Francis, 2013b) the need to understand that University and school should promote the culture of closeness, eliminating self-interests that build walls with respect to others. Therefore, the culture of closeness, dialogue and encounter must be cultivated in educational training contexts because every person is an end in itself and cannot be exploited as a consequence of an efficient culture (Pope Francis, 2015b).<sup>50</sup>
- ▶ Networking. An educational institution cannot be an island, but rather it needs to be a community that unifies educational experiences committed to local communities, but with a global vision to build a civilization of love and peace.
- ▶ Educating from a pedagogy of reality. Relying on experiential methodologies entails a way of making visible the four pillars of the Delors report (1996): learning to know, to do, to live together and to be.
- ▶ Developing the inter and transdisciplinarity. We educators do not have to take on and concern ourselves exclusively with our field of knowledge, but rather we have to look further away towards an education that is not structured in separate compartments and that conceptually integrates different

<sup>50</sup> “We need to build up this culture of encounter. We do not love concepts or ideas; no one loves a concept or an idea. We love people. Commitment, true commitment, is born of the love of men and women, of children and the elderly, of peoples and communities... of names and faces which fill our hearts” (Address of the Holy Father at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements Expo Feria Exhibition Centre, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 9th July, 2015).

disciplines. But, at the same time, it is important that educators know the limits of their own discipline and develop new perspectives from the links established with other disciplines. In this way, the growth in knowledge will not generate inequality or exclusion because there will be a global and non-sectoralized perspective of the person.

- ▶ Offering pedagogical methods that develop inner attitudes or dispositions of authenticity, empathy and unconditional acceptance (Bermejo, 2011). The authenticity or coherence that requires behaving consistently with one's own values, thoughts and feelings, being aware of limitations. The empathy that allows to know the feelings, desires, expectations and values of the other to understand them implies a cognitive, affective and behavioural effort. The empathic attitude includes active listening, predisposing our ears and our bodies to focus our attention on the other, and unconditional acceptance, which implies the absence of moralizing judgment. This attitude allows you to accept the other without prejudice for what he/she is and what he/she feels, creating a space for sincere communication and dialogue. The three attitudes are essential to recognize the dignity of every person.
- ▶ Developing a globalization of solidarity for a global world. Approaching a global world supposes a change in mentality that leads to *“transcending our own parcel and realizing that each human being is part of the entire universe, that any part of it —however remote it may be- affect him, and that ends up even affecting the other extreme”* (Torralba, 2019 p. 212)<sup>51</sup>. And to realise this solidarity, you need service as caring for the most fragile. This is inclusive because nobody is left out, as Pope Francis expresses to young people in Cuba (Pope Francis, 2015c). And it is not ideological because *“we do not serve ideas, we serve people”* (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 115).

## 6. The service-learning proposal as the main tool for the Scholas mission

John Dewey proposed that student's learning process should be based on experience, but he also warns that it can be underestimated if this experience is based on complacency or is meaningless because it is not good for society (Deeley, 2016). And from this perspective, service-learning was born in 1967 in the USA, as a methodology supported by an experiential education. And it is in 1969 when the first service-learning conference is organized in Atlanta. There are basically five disciplines that are involved in this methodology: pedagogy because it is grounded on learning based on experience and connected thanks to action, reflection

51 Own translation

and participation processes; philosophy because it helps to develop critical thinking, but from ethical and moral criteria supported by the culture of care; anthropology because it offers a vision of the human being in which social bonds are of vital importance to create just and supportive societies; psychology because it allows us to understand the meaning of prosociality while welcoming the diversity of human behaviour; and theology because it proposes the attitude of service as an educational potential for the integral change of the person.

*Service-learning is an essential pedagogical tool for the Scholas mission. It dynamically integrates living together and citizenship in a planned and systematized methodological innovation project whose objective is to promote student lifestyles that allow them to participate to transform society.*

Service-learning is an essential pedagogical tool for the Scholas mission. It dynamically integrates living together and citizenship in a planned and systematized methodological innovation project whose objective is to promote student lifestyles that allow them to participate to transform society. In terms of

education, it implies a deep reflection on the evaluation and didactic criteria, since the process understood as an educational pathway is the fundamental point. During the process, young people modulate their affections and cognitions. This methodology, is not only innovative, but also strengthens the mission, vision and values of Scholas.

*The problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without a spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable. As a result, work becomes more tiring than necessary, even leading at times to illness.*

Francis in his message to educators at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, Quito, on 7th July, 2015, gave us clues regarding the elements that we should keep in mind in innovation. Every innovative process develops critical thinking, capable of caring for today's

world. Globalization itself urges educational institutions to assume the responsibility of guiding students to find answers to the new challenges of society. Therefore, it is not appropriate to innovate and plan activities aimlessly. But:

*The problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without a spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable. As a result, work becomes*

*more tiring than necessary, even leading at times to illness* (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 82).

Service-learning is a flexible and appropriate methodology suitable for all young people because in the process itself, not only does the learning dimension prevail, but the service component.

## 7. Contributions of service-learning to a global citizenship

Service-learning contributes to global citizenship in the following aspects:

**a)** Developing a holistic learning that harmonically includes cognitive, affective, instrumental, attitudinal, motivational, existential and spiritual dimensions. Knowledge is acquired, but also the management of soft skills that affect the integrity of students. They enter into a reality that has an impact on them, but at the same time enables them to carry out their social intervention and service. Thus, it allows “*to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral*” (Pope Francis 2015, LS, 112).

**b)** Teaching how to network, enhancing initiative and creativity, while connecting with different stakeholders and generating educational alliances that improve the community.

**c)** Educating based on attitudes, due to the flexibility of the methodology itself. The global pandemic situation has not annulled the possibility of applying this in the classroom, since the modalities of direct, indirect, research and advocacy service (Chiva-Bartol & Gil-Gómez, 2018) have made it possible to be adapted to different realities.

**d)** Improving the teaching quality of educators by bringing them closer to reality. There are numerous contributions and benefits of Service-learning to the teaching activity. One of them is that it helps educators to participate in a methodology that, in a metaphorical sense, breaks down the physical walls of the classroom, that denotes a selective culture, a culture of safety and accommodation for a small group of young people. Staying in the “classroom walls” generates work inertia and also a comfort zone for educators.

**e)** Updating the vocation of educators and strengthening their mission. Helping students to leave the classroom contributes to updating one’s teaching vocation, since it implies rediscovering new ways of educating. This new “way of doing” radically changes the role of educators, since they no longer confine their teaching practice merely to an

instructional model. They now become a guide that comprehensively accompanies the students' educational process, providing them with the tools that allow them to get into the course subject, but in a personal and concrete way<sup>52</sup> (Pope Francis, 2015a). This updating of the educator's vocation also helps educators themselves develop "together with" their students a critical and reflective spirit about what happens in the nearby local environment, opening new training spaces that allow them to carry out interventions with a global and plural vision. Therefore, educators contribute to the culture of care and educate towards a new way of thinking that responds to the challenges of society and that breaks prejudices in both real and unknown situations.

**f)** Promotes the intrinsic motivation of educators. Accompanying projects of these characteristics developed by students also affects the intrinsic motivation of educators and, therefore, job satisfaction. The urgent need to overwhelm students with theoretical concepts is no longer important, what matters, however, is that they "learn the art of living," that they actively care about reality, about what is going on every day, offering others the tools and gifts received.

**g)** Strengthening the pedagogy of the encounter, urging the teacher to rethink the teaching-learning processes to achieve an integral and harmonious education of the person. It implies acknowledging "*man as a natural, cultural and historical being. An anthropology that accepts scientific assumptions, but that delves into the ontological roots of life and the person*" (Magdalena, 2007, p. 121)<sup>53</sup>. The didactics for this methodology is a space of encounter with the other. This type of pedagogy puts the emphasis on service, in such a way that commitment is understood as the logic of gratuity and gift. At the same time, the encounter is the key to hope because, based on service-learning, students are capable of transforming and improving reality, no matter how insignificant their interventions may be. Thanks to the encounter, the other is seen as important in our life, since it helps to put ourselves in the place of the other and, therefore, to empathize. The other helps us grow. With Service-Learning, the educator generates opportunities to open to the other, to a "thou."<sup>54</sup>

**h)** Raising awareness of the pedagogy of reality, making sense of the experience of the Church "*which goes forth*" that supposes a transformation of reality where both the educator and the student "come out of themselves," out of the classroom walls, and build

52 "Educational communities play a fundamental role, an essential role in the enrichment of civic and cultural life. Be careful! It is not enough to analyze and describe reality: there is a need to shape environments of creative thinking, discussions which develop alternatives to current problems, especially today. We need to move to the concrete" (Address of the Holy Father at the Meeting with Educators, Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, Quito, 7th July 2015).

53 Own translation.

54 "Our openness to others, each of whom is a 'thou' capable of knowing, loving and entering into dialogue, remains the source of our nobility as human persons. A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the 'Thou' of God" (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 119).

bridges: the educator with the student and the student with the vulnerable and suffering environment. This results in a didactics of reality. It is no longer taught from the practical assumptions, but from concrete and real contexts.

**i)** Highlighting the pedagogy of harmony. This helps educators to ask themselves how, what for and for whom they enter the classroom. The answers guide us towards a pedagogy capable of harmonizing the comprehensive dimensions of the human person: emotional, corporal, moral, psychological, spiritual, etc.

**j)** Humanizing educational processes. Activating this type of methodology contributes to personal and teaching improvement. It is not only necessary to learn to solve problems or teach a topic, but to become an expert on inclusion and humanity. Therefore, one of the great contributions of institutionalizing service-learning in our universities is that it significantly improves the quality and educational process established between professors and students. And this, in short, affects the essence of our mission because it places the university as an ideal space for humanization.

**k)** Strengthening the social engagement of students. Service-learning experiences develop profound attitudes and help shape lifestyles that respond to direct involvement in society's need.

**l)** Promoting students' proactivity. This methodology has obvious benefits for the student, since in order to provide solutions to problems or needs, it promotes the development of a proactive attitude. In addition, intellectual and personal skills are acquired that are reflected in educational results that are not easy to achieve by other means such as the transmission of values and education in virtues. Service-Learning "*protects human action from becoming empty activism; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else*" (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 237). Therefore, an academic, social and emotional improvement is produced at the same time that integral education is promoted. Furthermore, it offers a way of proceeding to be part of society and favour spaces for public coexistence and active citizenship.

**m)** Involving the student as an active agent of social change. The access to reality stems from the experience and the interpersonal relationship of the encounter as a powerful factor in learning. This is how students learn to read reality and broadens perspectives on the way the world is understood. They feel part of the society, collaborating in an immediate area of need and being responsible and an active part of the community. They are educated towards a new way of looking at things, and the contents of the course are witnessed because they are experienced in first person.

n) Developing a sense of community in students. Service-learning helps students be “next to,” leaving a self-referentiality that only leads to selfish and narcissistic actions. When students participate in these projects, they are recognized and perceived with relational and encounter capacity, and are part of a community to build a better world. This methodology highlights the relevance of otherness and interpersonal processes. And based on that, it is possible to build a community.

In this way, the acquired academic training enables students to achieve important objectives related to knowledge and technical skills. Students advance in the design and implementation of actions so that they are transformational actions, especially in the local environment.

In addition, all this has an impact on the positive perception of students regarding the educational institution.

## 8. Service-learning and Scholas, an education for change

Scholas educational projects and, specifically, the support for active methodologies, such as service-learning, create inclusive spaces that promote cultural and social development. This change of era in which we are challenges us to know reality and to know how to interpret it. Knowledge is applied to face problems or extreme situations of reality. At the same time, however, it favours research taking into account the definition of the problem and the related knowledge that suggests a possible solution applied to reality. In addition, the results and educational and pedagogical relationships based on the agapic dimension are valued. This is understood as a fraternal and unconditional welcome from educators to students, seeking their good in an integral way.

This type of methodology is essential to promote a change in education and in the world, to build a bridge between what has been thought and what has been lived, between theory and practice, and between university and society. Breaking prejudices and schemes, adjusting expectations, maturing emotionally and developing both prosocial values and different sensitivities are strengths of service-learning as a hallmark for a global citizen education typical of the Scholas Occurrentes project.

This educational change has service at its core. It is a motivating force for the social and civic responsibility of students, since it considers that the concern of everyone for everyone is a guarantee to care for the common home. This active and experiential methodology, as is typical of Scholas projects, entails a change in Higher Education Institutions, and

especially in Catholic Universities. The Church is an “*expert in humanity*” (Paul VI, 1965) and, therefore, an expert in generating an educational environment in which the student can develop a sense of responsibility and freedom under criteria such as seeing, judging and acting. The Pope’s call to be a Church “which goes forth” (Pope Francis, 2013, EG) becomes a reality, building the foundations for an authentic dialogue in the face of socio-cultural challenges and in the face of the current educational emergency.

*Every innovation should wonder whether it strengthens the mission and the identity signs of the Educational Centre Project.*

Every innovation should wonder whether it strengthens the mission and the identity signs of the Educational Centre Project (PEC). Scholas projects,

and specifically Service-Learning, strengthen the sense of people and community because they eliminate discriminatory behaviours from reflection and critical thinking. This implies learning to distinguish the spaces that lead to solidarity and recognition of the person in their dignity.

Santos invites us to rethink the attitude of teachers: “*In these times of uncertainty, it would be very stimulating for teachers to assume with a flexible spirit... new disciplinary orientations and, above all, an approach focused on student learning, both of specific content and of procedures and civic social values*” (Santos et al., 2015, pp.72-73)<sup>55</sup>. Thus, values, procedures and attitudes take on a special interest.

## 9. Fraternity thought and fraternity lived

Service-learning makes real what can be present only on the mental or thought plane. The experience in concrete actions of fraternity strengthens the personal identity, but forged from the other. “*The personal relationship between the I and the you, becomes effective in the social and dialogical we*” (Cicchese, 2018, p. 137)<sup>56</sup>. The relational character, where narration prevails, favours perceiving the sense of beauty (Han, 2020) in the other. It is a lived fraternity, made flesh, that unites head, heart and hands, educating, as Cencini says, in a:

*...relational sensitivity that indicates to what extent the other is important to me, and to what extent my life is effectively and affectively open to the other, and how much I am willing to interrupt my journey to stop to help those in need* (Cencini, 2019, p. 32).<sup>57</sup>

55 Own translation.

56 Own translation.

57 Own translation.

When the person projects the concreteness in the action of the sense of fraternity, it makes possible the reality of the four fundamental tenets that, for Francis, contribute to creating a new mentality that thinks of solidarity, but not as occasional actions aimed at reflecting “do-goodism”, but thinking in terms of community that prioritize the lives of others (Bergoglio, 2013). These translate into: time is superior to space, avoiding considering limits and boundaries that divide, and favouring attitudes that crystallize in behaviours that keep society in mind; unity prevails over conflict, understood as a way of consolidating social friendship and initiating the process towards a culture of peace; the reality is more important than the idea, giving rise to a constructive solidarity, where the idea is inherently related to reality and spontaneously passes from the mental to the behavioural plane; and the whole is greater than the part (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 145). With service-learning, students act locally, but without losing the global perspective because what matters is not the particular good, but the common good. (Palau, 2020).

## 10. Conclusions

Service-learning space help educate humanely, but with open horizons. Not only is it integrated into the contents of a specific subject, but it also ensures the assessment of personal, moral and social skills of all the educational agents involved. That is why it contributes to humanize education. And this means not only that educators teach and students learn, but that everyone is driven to live and take part in realities based on the common good tenet. Thus, educational projects of legitimate encounter are planned, in which a universal fraternity becomes a reality, educating in the logic of gift and gratuity, while putting talents received at the service of others.

This methodology contributes to strengthening the Catholic identity of Catholic Universities. Students learn by serving and the service component gain relevance. At the same time, it educates for global citizenship by connecting with reality.

All education is not neutral, but rather conveys a meaning: “a pedagogy of meaning that aims to explore the communication of meaning between educators and students and vice versa” (Torralba, 2016, 8).<sup>58</sup>

Applying service-learning in universities implies training minds and citizens so that they feel an active part of society and develop a broad vision capable of placing distant realities together. We have the responsibility to be at the service of a new humanism, favouring spaces for dialogue and work for the common good. This methodology is an opportunity

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58 Own translation

to establish educational and pedagogical relationships that teach the meaning of the common good, dialogue, solidarity, hope, encounter and, ultimately, the authentic meaning of love and service. Service-learning calls us to coherence in all universities so that they respond with fidelity to what they are called for, integrating knowledge and content towards humanization.

Scholas reinforces the dialogic experience. It relates theory and practice and highlights competences that enable professional development in public life and in today's pluralistic culture. In addition, it encourages transdisciplinarity.

Service-learning promotes an integral education and dialogic experience because students not only use the knowledge acquired on a subject, but also adopt its existential and practical character. Strength lies in service and in offering a response to social needs, developing personal awareness and valuing the student's commitment and personal contribution to the community. (Rubio & Escofet, 2017)

In addition, it brings de-centration, high-mindedness and a clear global ecclesial conscience. It educates for responsibility, supporting the development of critical and reflective young people for an open and plural society. It integrates plurality in pluralism, while it is especially aware of personal responsibility regarding a social need or community problem. It also reshapes the concept of solidarity, educating being together with others, that is, being, but in relation to "us" and the large human family. Service-learning projects and Scholas programmes make it possible to transform education by making social friendship and lived universal fraternity a reality.

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## 10. YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN SERVICE-LEARNING AND SYNOD ON YOUNG PEOPLE

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### Abstract

This chapter aims to deepen youth leadership in solidarity Service-learning in the light of the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 2018 under the motto: “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” The relevance of linking both subjects lies in their commonalities: young people value being listened to, accompanied and invited when they are proposed to be protagonists of the transformation of their reality or the realities in which they find themselves. The Synod on young people promoted by Pope Francis has been a great opportunity to outline the keys necessary to develop listening, understanding, accompanying and encouraging the leadership and life of all young people, Catholics and those who profess other beliefs and that, with good will, they also seek to be agents that transform our reality. Service-Learning allows us to see how young students of Higher Education are protagonists of transformation and comprehensive experiences, developing meaningful projects through which they make explicit the academic content acquired, with great impact on the communities where they carry them out and, at the same time, they learn from what communities give them. The contributions of service-learning and the Synod on young people can provide enormous wealth to the identity and mission of the universities and their university pastorals to continue accompanying the life, vocation and leadership of young students.

### 1. Introduction

Young people have a genuine drive, a creative and dynamic spirit when it comes to carrying out solidarity service, facing causes that are in favour of practicing responsible citizenship and a social engagement for the most vulnerable.

In the light of the Synod on Young People, we will see that this leadership in young students is fundamental for the Catholic Church, since it allows to “rejuvenate” and truly experience a Church that is close, fraternal and constantly “*going forth*” (Pope Francis, 2013), looking after those who are on the margins of our societies.

Young people value being listened to, accompanied and invited to share their gifts when they are proposed to have a real role, where they are jointly responsible for projects that have a transformative impact on the reality in which they live.

*Leadership driven by Service-Learning in Higher Education students is an opportunity of our time, so that the identity and mission of each Catholic university is strengthened to accompany men and women of today in diverse, plural, multicultural and interreligious societies and promote a culture of encounter.*

Leadership driven by Service-Learning in Higher Education students is an opportunity of our time, so that the identity and mission of each Catholic university is strengthened to accompany men and women of today in diverse, plural, multicultural and interreligious societies and promote a culture of encounter.

Service-Learning allows students to awaken a strong leadership, because it is key in this pedagogy (Tapia, 2018): they are thereby motivated and invited to reflect, design, execute, evaluate and celebrate a project from and for the community.

It is a unique event in which students can see how the contents of their studies are put into practice and become transforming agents of their reality. It should be noted that in this chapter I will use the term Solidarity Service-learning (AYSS in its acronym in Spanish), since:

The concept used at CLAYSS and that has spread in Latin America and other regions is, in Spanish, “*aprendizaje-servicio solidario*” (solidarity service-learning). The stress is not only on “service” (a term that can be associated with charity or individual action), but on a practice of effective solidarity more oriented at “doing something together” than at “doing something for somebody”, and also aimed at encouraging collective efforts for the common good and an active citizenship that promotes rights and assumes responsibilities. (Tapia, 2018, p.21)<sup>59</sup>

## 2. Community leadership

The leadership that Higher Education students are invited to experience has to have certain characteristics that show the importance of meeting, reflecting and planning together with others.

59 Own translation

Putting oneself at the service of the community and, in turn, allowing oneself to be taught by it; because if not, you can run the risk of living a leadership that leads to individualism and an ephemeral and not very fruitful triumphalism, both personally and collectively.

Many young people carry out this community leadership by being active animators that seek joint solutions together with other academic, cultural, ecclesial spaces, etc., in the face of situations of social vulnerability. As mentioned in the final document of the Synod on Young People: “(...) *social commitment is a specific feature of today’s young people. Alongside some who are indifferent, there are many others who are ready to commit themselves to initiatives of voluntary work, active citizenship and social solidarity (...)*” (Synod of Bishops, 2018b, 46).

Young students, along with the other stakeholders who develop an SL project, experience solidarity as an encounter, as an opportunity to transform reality and sensitize the entire community (Tapia, 2018).

Generating this culture of encounter, it is observed that the people of the community are not regarded as mere recipients of a solidarity project, but as active stakeholders who are listened to, respected and valued with their innate knowledge and thus carry forward the process of social transformation. As Aranguren tells us:

*(...) Solidarity as an encounter makes the beneficiaries of its action the authentic protagonists and subjects of their process of struggle for what is fair, for the resolution of their problems, for the achievement of their personal and collective autonomy. (Aranguren, 1997, p.25)<sup>60</sup>*

Solidarity is an action that, no doubt, places the ones who practice it in a fundamental role and in a state of communion in which the afflictions of humanity are not indifferent: “*only the one who makes the brother’s or sister’s right his or her duty is in solidarity, by co-practising liberation*”. (Casaldáliga & Vigil, 1992, p.104)

Solidarity has been mistreated, among other things, because it has been pigeonholed as a light-hearted action, and it has even been used only to “calm consciences”, with actions that are born out of one’s own desire to do and not out of an encounter with others. The Holy Father makes this situation explicit:

*The word “solidarity” is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few. (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 188).*

60 Own translation

*We must aspire for Higher Education students to discover in our Catholic universities a way of community solidarity, where everyone is participant and protagonist.*

We must aspire for Higher Education students to discover in our Catholic universities a way of community solidarity, where everyone is participant and protagonist.

This modality manifests itself from the curriculum to the corridor, from the laboratory to the reception, from the offices to the lecture hall. Otherwise, we run the risk of simplifying and minimizing solidarity in isolated, unsystematic actions that, although often necessary, can lead to merely a welfare-like approach.

Young people are determined to live solidarity and to work for it, since it generates a real change in the person and the community. But also, because by living solidarity, we live the hope of working together with others in diverse and plural spaces of our society for the common good.

In this sense, we see how solidarity action allows young people, who possess an admirable docility, to meet peers who develop their leadership in other religious, cultural, sports, union, student spaces, etc.

Young people often meet and work together for a humanitarian project that transforms the injustices experienced by hundreds of people around the world. As Burmese Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, mentions about the youth of Myanmar:

*Young people do not accept that their hope is stolen. Their strength of mind is a great inspiration for all of us. The sense of “unity in diversity” and mutual solidarity between people of different ethnic groups and religions, side by side for the same cause, is a sign of the maturity of a people. It is good to see it emerge clearly, at a critical moment for the country.<sup>61</sup>*

For this reason, we must understand that AYSS is a pedagogy that invites us to enter into a true process of community solidarity involving educators, students and the community, to generate a common good in pursuit of a meaningful and significant practice for all.

Young people are eager to serve, to experience solidarity service. They are loyal to projects that really have a transforming coherence and that effectively announce or convey

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61 (Own translation) Card, Bo, Ch.M. (12th March 2021) Interview to Burmese Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, L'Osservatore Romano. Retrieved from: <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/es/news/2021-03/en-myanmar-los-jovenes-no-aceptan-que-se-les-robe-la-esperanza.html>

a concrete message to the community. But we know that, to capitalize on these forces, we need to think of an effective methodological path in our institutional spaces.

Solidarity service-learning must be institutionalized, since it is a duty of the entire university institution that young students put the knowledge acquired at the service of the community and especially of the vulnerable and impoverished community, present in many of the societies where our institutions are located.

As Miquel Martínez says:

*The University is a living space for students and also for educators, a living space where we learn the things we live; that is, when one learns the values of solidarity and engagement, one does not learn them as ideals, but learns them better if these values exist in their learning contexts.*<sup>62</sup>

LA university is a vital space, where students should feel invited to be able to fulfil themselves, train and discover themselves as people with a life project that is achieved with a deep and systematic support.

John Paul II expressed:

*As a result of this inspiration, the community is animated by a spirit of freedom and charity; it is characterized by mutual respect, sincere dialogue, and protection of the rights of individuals. It assists each of its members to achieve wholeness as human persons; in turn, everyone in the community helps in promoting unity, and each one, according to his or her role and capacity, contributes towards decisions which affect the community, and also towards maintaining and strengthening the distinctive Catholic character of the Institution.* (John Paul II, ECE, 21).

Catholic Universities must create and maintain this vital space. Because there are many young people who spend a lot of hours in institutions. It is crucial to help grow and work to offer a space where life is cared for and valued.

As the young people told the Church on the way to the synod:

While the Church already meets many of us in schools and universities throughout the world, we want to see her presence in these places in a stronger and more effective way. Resources are not wasted when they are put into these areas as these are the places in which many young people spend most of their time and often engage with people of varied socioeconomic backgrounds. (Synod of Bishops, 2018a)

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62 UNISERVITATE, (29th October, 2020), Why a committed and supportive Higher Education today?, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Og\\_LPLUIrKg&ab\\_channel=UNISERVITATE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Og_LPLUIrKg&ab_channel=UNISERVITATE)

The University is a land of mission and meeting, where we can accompany the lives of so many young people who bring their realities, dreams, frustrations, knowledge and questions.

Our Catholic Universities must be favourable “environments” to receive the lives of students; an environment where young people do not feel that they are only a number, but people valued, cared for and invited to go through a personal, personalizing educational process and to discover the leadership that leads to serving in the community.

The University, as the Holy Father reminds us:

*(...) is a frontier which awaits you, a periphery in which to welcome and attend to man's existential poverty. Poverty in relationships, in human growth, tend to fill heads without creating a shared community plan, a common goal, an honest brotherhood. Take care to*

*The University, as the Holy Father reminds us:*

*(...) is a frontier which awaits you, a periphery in which to welcome and attend to man's existential poverty.*

*always go to meet others, to catch the “scent” of today's man, until permeation with their joys and hopes, their sorrows and anguish. (Pope Francis, 2014)*

Developing SL in our Catholic Universities in an institutionalized way allows to create or recreate the University. It makes the University an environment where young students can see how their personal knowledge, and those provided in the development of learning in Higher Education, are complemented with those of their peers and other University stakeholders, to put them at the service of other environments where life demands and is threatened.

This premise is not just an elusive good wish or a negative generalization, since in many universities around the world hard work is being done effectively (there are testimonies that speak of this and confirm this) for young students to experience a social responsibility.

For young people to become aware of social responsibility is to be in communion with God's project. The project where all men and women feel loved and valued.

Service-learning enables to enhance the role of young people in their educational process from the value of service to others, and make universities truly live a liberating, comprehensive and transforming education.

As the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Global Compact on Education says about Service-Learning:

*We could point to this process as a development from education to service to education as service, whereby our brethren are both the way and the goal of education.* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2020, p.17)

Service to others is, without a doubt, the fundamental key in the learning development of Higher Education students. In this service, the true identity and mission of every Catholic University is manifested.

The mission of the University is fruitful when it serves the poorest neighbour. In that service, it is fully performed.

*Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid.* (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 187)

If the academic action of a university is not in the service of others, it runs the risk of creating an institution that is remote, outdated, hermetic and unaware of what is happening in the reality of thousands of men and women today. And this does not coincide with the pedagogy of Jesus, who knew how to approach the reality of his time, approach his neighbour to listen to him, accompany him, support him, dignify him and transform his life.

For this reason, we must remember that Catholic Universities,

*Included among its research activities, therefore, will be a study of serious contemporary problems in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the world's resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level.* (John Paul II, ECE, 32).

We are invited to creatively deploy all the tools that are necessary to encourage, from the entire academic curriculum, personal and community leadership in all young students. Pope Francis writes:

*The training of leaders achieves its goal when it seeks to make the life of the university develop not only the mind but also the "heart", the conscience, together with students' practical abilities. Scientific and theoretical knowledge must be blended with the sensitivity of the scholar and researcher, so that the fruits*

*The training of leaders achieves its goal when it seeks to make the life of the university develop not only the mind but also the “heart”, the conscience, together with students’ practical abilities. Scientific and theoretical knowledge must be blended with the sensitivity of the scholar and researcher, so that the fruits of study are not acquired in a self-referential way, concerned with professional training alone, but have a relational and social end.*

*of study are not acquired in a self-referential way, concerned with professional training alone, but have a relational and social end. (Pope Francis, 2019).*

It is the task of every Catholic University to train young people to be humanly professional people, with their feet on the ground and committed in solidarity with their society.

### 3. Support to young people

Supporting young people in Higher Education is fundamental. If it is possible that students feel they are called to awaken the leader that lies within them, it is necessary that they feel accompanied, encouraged and supported, so that this leadership is truly a force that has a great impact on their lives and the place where they put it into practice.

To this end, we are going to reflect on how to cultivate support that is meaningful and transcendental for the lives of young students.

We can start by listening to students in the process they are going through in a personal way: listening to them talk about their lives, their successes, their failures, their hopes, their own uncertainties about their life project, as outlined by the 300 young people in the pre-synodal meeting in the city of Rome:

*We seek to be listened to and to not merely be spectators in society but active participants. We seek a Church that helps us find our vocation, in all of its senses. Furthermore, sadly not all of us believe sainthood is something achievable and that it is a path to happiness. We need to revitalize the sense of community that leads us to a sense of belonging. (Synod of Bishops, 2018a).*

Young people seek to be protagonists, we cannot turn a deaf ear to their voices, their thoughts. You have to create openness to hear what they want to express, without censorship and without conditioning. And so they notice—as it will describe at the end—that they are assisted with a genuine support service. As the final document of the Synod of

Bishops states:

*Accompaniment for the sake of valid, stable and well-founded choices, is therefore a service that is widely needed. Being present, supporting and accompanying the journey towards authentic choices is one way for the Church to exercise her maternal function, giving birth to the freedom of the children of God. Service of this kind is simply the continuation of the way in which the God of Jesus Christ acts towards his people: through constant and heartfelt presence, dedicated and loving closeness and tenderness without limits. (Synod of Bishops, 2018b, 91).*

Approaching students to accompany their reality is to touch “*sacred ground*” (Pope Francis, 2019a), to enter their lives requires respect, simplicity, brotherhood and tenderness. It should be remembered, as we have already said, that young students are not just another number in our universities, they are people who come to our fields loaded with stories, and we must listen to those stories, embrace them, support them and project them so that they continue to grow.

This requires developing a true institutional support plan where the role of faculty members is a key element, as well as that of the other stakeholders in the university, because accompanying students is the responsibility of the entire educational community.

As it is expressed, the action of “listening” is much more than “hearing.” “*There are those who believe that by speaking you learn to speak, when actually it is by listening that you learn to speak. Those who do not know how to listen cannot speak well*”. (Freire, 2008, p.52)<sup>63</sup>

When listening, it is done in depth and with responsibility considering what is being expressed; but, in addition, it is possible to exercise empathy and care for the person. Young students, through a conducive climate and environment, can express themselves freely and fully entrust their lives to us.

To develop a true solidarity service-learning educational process, we must invite to listen and see both the students’ reality and that of all the stakeholders who will have a role in the project.

The University must make a decisive choice in creating institutional spaces where young people find the opportunity to express themselves and talk about their own lives within their learning pathway.

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63 Own translation.

This challenges the educator to be concerned not only about the masterful development of his presentations, but also to find that healthy balance between delivering an excellent class and, at the same time, being a “counterpart” who listens, encourages and invites students to discuss. As Tapia states: “Unlike the traditional teaching model, in SL the role of teachers is more that of a counterpart than of a professor”. (Tapia, 2018, p.34).

### 3.1 The teacher as a counterpart

Among their tasks, teachers do not forget the support service. They accompany the pedagogical process as well as the vital process of students, they pay attention to everything that is happening to young undergraduates while the educational process is under way.

Clearly, we cannot be naïve. Many times, in some universities, we do not regard teachers as counterparts and the intention of this paper is certainly not to judge on that, but quite the opposite: to bring it to light so that we can reflect on the praxis, as educators who teach in an institution with Catholic identity and mission, which is called to look after people in a preferential way.

Whatever the educators creed, the supporting role is utmost important. Therefore, in the context of teaching at a Catholic University, it is important to do it naturally and with commitment, since it is in its roots and it is a fundamental part of its ideology to continue with the teachings and practices of Jesus the Teacher.

It is interesting to see how this image of Jesus the Teacher or Jesus the educator can help us awaken or rekindle, as adult educators, the action of accompanying today’s students.

This kind of support allows us to see and put into practice those methods that, even as the years go by, are always effective and necessary to accompany people in their personal and educational process.

*It should be mentioned that teachers accompanying this process are not the “heroes” of Higher Education.*

It should be mentioned that teachers accompanying this process are not the “heroes” of Higher Education. Making this clear will ensure that no greater demands will be imposed on them, nor will the opening of a way facilitate

this false and not very Christian idealism that we sometimes create in our institutions and that can be counterproductive; both for educators and for the institution itself.

The educator accompanying this process is, above all, a person, a flesh-and-blood human being, with feelings, emotions, weaknesses and strengths, but with a vocation totally at the service of teaching and caring for others. As Ángela García-Pérez and Rafael Mendía affirm:

*The counterpart as an educator (or the educator as a counterpart) is an adult who contributes with their skills and experiential background to the personal and social growth pathway of individuals and groups in the educational process. Adults contribute their constructivist criticism, their career and empathy to stimulate the group and the individual to build their own project. (García-Pérez & Mendía, 2015, p.44)<sup>64</sup>*

The educator who provides support is the one who somehow allows his humanity to be glimpsed in front of his students. He is still that adult who, with a measured and healthy distance, is interested, concerned and helps to motivate young people with his or her experience and training, to encourage them to build their own educational project. And, clearly, this support has also a great impact on the student's life project.

Professors, by supporting young students, continue their training. *"The attentive educator, the smart educator, does not learn in class but reading in people as if they were a text". (Freire, 2008, p.48)<sup>65</sup>*

Young people with admirable abilities become aware of those adult educators who are distant, who only see them as "repositories" of content and as mere listeners to a master class.

Different are those professors who, in addition to offering their wisdom and knowledge, "spend" their vocation in favour of accompanying the life process of each one of them. By providing a support service, professors inspire and motivate young students to develop social leadership in their own contexts. As García-Pérez and Mendía explain:

*It is a process that educates through the quality of the relationship: transmitting interest, enthusiasm and motivation over the shared project; living together and communicating in an environment of respect and freedom; to give the centre to those who are living their educational process from within so that they feel valued, capable and playing a relevant and transformative social role. (García-Pérez & Mendía, 2015, p.44)<sup>66</sup>*

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64 Own translation.

65 Own translation.

66 Own translation.

It is of the utmost importance that the University develops the educator's support to young students, since it allows them to feel motivated and valued. In addition, it is important for the family to see that their children are being supported by significant people in the places they attend. As the final document of the Synod of Bishops "Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment" reminds us:

*As well as family members, those called to exercise a role of accompaniment include all the significant persons in the various spheres of young people's lives, such as teachers, animators, trainers, and other figures of reference, including professional ones. (Synod of Bishops, 2018b, 93).*

The University, by exercising this support, allows the learning process to be displayed outstandingly. The curriculum, the contents, life, planning, the process, everything becomes a great framework, which values young people as a person achieving a comprehensive learning "head, heart and hands" (Pope Francis, 2015). This integrity is necessary to live a true leadership for the community.

Support, among other things, enables students to discern also their own life according to the needs of the reality of the society in which they live. The educator's support, as we have mentioned, contributes in this sense to "read the world" (Freire, 2015 p.44) and awaken a leadership in pursuit of an action that transforms that reality or realities that are being unfairly hit by different situations of oppression. The bishops, in the final document of the synod, affirm:

*Accompaniment cannot limit itself to the path of spiritual growth and to the practices of the Christian life. Equally fruitful is accompaniment along the path of gradual assumption of responsibilities within society, for example in the professional sphere or in socio-political engagement. (Synod of Bishops, 2018b, 94).*

A university that accompanies young students in their way to be protagonists and stakeholders transforming reality entails encouraging young people to see reality, especially the suffering reality of many people, and discern in the light of academic content, the Gospel, the Catholic social teaching and also the charisma of each university.

From all the above reflections, we can say that in Higher Catholic Education the role of faculty members is utmost important, as someone who walks along the pathway with every young student, so that they can feel encouraged to exercise the role of leader within themselves and put it at the service of the community.

It is always appropriate that professors of Catholic Universities, as a way to review their praxis, can give themselves the opportunity to ask two questions proposed by Prof. Dr. Arantzazu Martínez Odría:

*What opportunity do we offer our students to look at reality from other perspectives different from the most widespread in our immediate environment? What kind of reference do we represent for them, for each of our students and colleagues, when looking at the reality of the world around us?*

*What opportunity do we offer our students to look at reality from other perspectives different from the most widespread in our immediate environment? What kind of reference do we represent for them, for each of our students and colleagues, when looking at the reality of the world around us?<sup>67</sup>*

It is necessary to be able to create or revitalize spaces in our Catholic Universities to accompany those who accompany. This means, a space for faculty members to feel supported, listened to and strengthened to exercise a quality teaching practice with their students.

Let us remind ourselves that the educator who develops his vocation in our institutions is not someone who can do anything and endure everything, but someone who is also a human being who needs to be supported to continue developing his personal and professional growth.

This support is genuine and true when it is a comprehensive, careful support, and covering not only pedagogical, but also administrative, economic and, above all, spiritual areas.

The University is fruitful when it accompanies, encourages, guides, supports and lives the service. Let's keep accompanying each others.

#### **4. Towards a synodal, popular and missionary pastoral ministry**

Every campus pastoral ministry is called to develop a synodal, popular and missionary life. So that it continues to grow, strengthening its identity and its mission.

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<sup>67</sup> UNISERVITATE, (29th October de 2020), Reflections on Service-Learning in the Identity and Mission of Catholic Higher Education. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcQ2Y8dePkl&ab\\_channel=CLAYSSDigital](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcQ2Y8dePkl&ab_channel=CLAYSSDigital)

Young students are agents of transformation and have an active role in recreating the campus ministry, boldly and creatively carrying out proposals that integrate all the University stakeholders.

The campus pastoral ministry cannot be away or set aside from the institution, let alone minimized in it. Since it *“offers the members of the university community an opportunity to integrate religious and moral principles with their academic study and non-academic activities, thus integrating faith with life.”* (John Paul II, 1990, ECE, 38).

The pastoral ministry of each university has to work collaboratively across disciplines with all the other spaces on campus. Carrying out this would prove a true evangelizing educational project in a synodal perspective.

*The pastoral ministry of each university has to work collaboratively across disciplines with all the other spaces on campus. Carrying out this would prove a true evangelizing educational project in a synodal perspective.*

Synodality must be experienced together with the joint responsibility of young people, to think and execute the decisions made as an educational community. Since it is a synodal university pastoral ministry, it will be making a

true renewal and will be fulfilling the dream expressed by the Holy Father:

*I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.* (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 27).

The pastoral ministry in Higher Education should work as a *“popular youth ministry”* (Pope Francis, 2019a, 230) where it develops a comprehensive proposal, so that it reaches out to all young people who attend university.

When we refer to it being popular, we are saying that it includes everyone and especially the weakest and most remote, as Father Rafael Tello tells us:

*The popular culture tends to include everyone and achieve what is good for everyone, which is why it has a universalist bias, and that desire for everyone to enjoy what is good, often leads her to adapt to the pace of the weakest.* (Tello, 2011, p.114).

The popular culture strongly breaks into the university context. The University must have the doors open not only to go out as a mission to vulnerable and impoverished young people, but it must also invite these young people to enter and be part of the university environment.

The Catholic University must facilitate that impoverished young people have the opportunity to be part of it and not just recipients of some university project. As the Holy Father reminds us: *“The Synod called for the development of a youth ministry capable of being inclusive, with room for all kinds of young people, to show that we are a Church with open doors”* (Pope Francis, ChV, 234).

For this reason, university pastoral ministry must take into account new forms of announcement, more flexible times, simple and close language, and a process in which everyone can feel invited.

As Pope Francis states:

*At times, in the attempt to develop a pure and perfect youth ministry, marked by abstract ideas, protected from the world and free of every flaw, we can turn the Gospel into a dull, meaningless and unattractive proposition. Such a youth ministry ends up completely removed from the world of young people and suited only to an elite Christian youth that sees itself as different, while living in an empty and unproductive isolation.* (Pope Francis, ChV, 232).

University pastoral ministry, to be fruitful, must carry out the action of “going forth” to meet everyone. And this can be achieved by being in a state of popular youth mission that *“breaks through our customary models and ways of thinking”* (Pope Francis, 2019a, 239).

University has to encourage the popular youth mission, supporting and encouraging it so that young students continue to create and recreate new ways of bringing the Gospel and the institution’s charisma to the entire community.

SL is, without a doubt, a great means to be able to make this popular youth mission a reality in our institutions in an effective and concrete way, since it allows us to integrate pastoral activities with academic excellence and social engagement.

Therefore, SL enriches the university pastoral ministry because, in addition to making the Gospel clear in an effective way, it manages to integrate *“science and faith, culture and spirituality, theory and practice”* (Rial, 2015). And at the same time, the university pastoral ministry provides SL with a deep sense of belonging and communion in each

*SL enriches the university pastoral ministry because, in addition to making the Gospel clear in an effective way, it manages to integrate “science and faith, culture and spirituality, theory and practice”. And at the same time, the university pastoral ministry provides SL with a deep sense of belonging and communion in each of its projects, achieving a true reflection of what God expresses to us by way of the reality in which we are.*

As the Holy Father tells us:

*Young people are greatly enriched when they overcome their reticence and dare to visit homes, and in this way make contact with people’s lives. They learn how to look beyond their family and their group of friends, and they gain a broader vision of life. At the same time, their faith and their sense of being part of the Church grow stronger. Youth missions, which usually take place during school holidays after a period of preparation, can lead to a renewed experience of faith and even serious thoughts about a vocation. (Pope Francis, ChV, 240).*

The popular youth mission will bring the Catholic University closer to other diverse areas, where they also need the presence of God the father, who goes forth to meet them, to be a companion on the road of life.

Only the university that goes forth is the one “*taking the first step, being involved and supportive, bearing fruit and rejoicing*” (Pope Francis, 2013) because it walks in communion with everyone.

## 5. Propose dreams to young people

*Young students seek in different ways the “vertigo” that makes them feel alive. So, let’s provide for it! Let’s encourage everything that really helps them transform their dreams into projects. Let us strive so that they can discover that all the potential they have is a bridge, a step towards a vocation, in the broadest and most beautiful sense of the word. Let’s propose ambitious goals, great challenges,*

of its projects, achieving a true reflection of what God expresses to us by way of the reality in which we are.

Fragmenting these two areas and not linking them (SL-Pastoral) would be a huge deficiency for our Catholic Universities and a loss for all those who are determined to carry out a true institutional evangelizing mission.

*and help them carrying out and achieving them. Let's not leave them alone and let's challenge them more than they challenge us. (Pope Francis, 2018, p.140)<sup>68</sup>.*

In the light of the Synod on Young People, SL allows us to strongly invite young students, to be protagonists of their dreams, to carry out everything they propose to do based on their personal and community goals.

*Service-Learning empowers young people's dreams of transformation and makes them come true by proposing a true process of meaningful learning and meeting with the community.*

S e r v i c e - L e a r n i n g empowers young people's dreams of transformation and makes them come true by proposing a true process of meaningful learning and meeting with the community.

The aforementioned invitation of Pope Francis: *"Let us strive so that they can discover that all the potential they have is a bridge"*, is notably expressed in SL, when Higher Education students discover that they are protagonists and observe that their solidarity action is united with that of a community that not only receives, but also shares its knowledge with them.

Service-learning never leaves young students alone, but on the contrary, it makes them experience the sense of community in a unique way, where they can visualize what educational development does when the contents are applied in concrete and real situations.

SL also makes all students—whether they come from other creeds or do not profess any belief—feel invited and summoned to be part of a dream in which all voices are heard and are necessary to share a common interest. And that common interest, as Paul Knitter states:

*It is a commitment to liberation and global responsibility, (...). Common concern for justice will provide the common context, starting point and criteria for both interreligious dialogue and fruitful cooperation. (Knitter, 2005, p.118)<sup>69</sup>.*

Service for the common good offered by young people from different beliefs is a valuable interreligious experience for students. It helps us understand that the world we live in, we are all part of a universal family and that no one should feel left out.

*(...) all those who have other visions of life, who belong to other religions or who distance themselves from religion altogether. All the young, without exception,*

68 Own translation

69 Own translation

*are in God's heart and therefore also in the Church's heart.* (Synod of Bishops, 2018b, 117).

Young people know that we live and experience social, religious, and cultural diversities and it is them who remind us that we must open ourselves to dialogue with the different parts of society in order to walk in unity. They assume the “polyhedral model” with great dedication. (Pope Francis, 2013)

SL helps us live a true Church “which goes forth” (Pope Francis, 2013), which goes to the peripheries in search of generating a culture of encounter. And young people are the first ones who want to go forth and experience that encounter; they are the ones who are willing to make the dreams of a community come true.

Young people are the ones who do not want to stay still, comfortable in their places, as José María Rodríguez Olaizola, reminds us:

*(...) We need to become aware that many young people can—and want—to have something more to say, to fight and to suggest. Yes, there are also young people in the Church looking for a place. And that place cannot be just that of someone who is sitting in a classroom, or on the benches of a temple, listening with infinite patience.* (Olaizola, 2020, p.85)<sup>70</sup>

Let us invite young people to leave their desks in our classrooms to bravely go forth to meet reality, see it, interpret it and choose new paths to help transform it. SL offers creative tools that allow to respond to this invitation through concrete facts for the benefit of a community.

Thousands of young people, facing the Covid-19 pandemic, got up and voluntarily gave their time to show solidarity with their neighbours. Like young people in Spain, who joined the campaign “*I help you with the garbage*” favouring the care of their neighbours. Or like young people in Colombia, who have organized collections in favour of neighbourhoods where the state has not arrived, and from the universities have participated in the production of protection or diagnostic material.

These two experiences are part of many others that have been collected and can be found in the “map of good practices in pandemic” on CLAYSS website.<sup>71</sup> These projects from different parts of the world show, once again, that young people are a source of hope in a context of uncertainty.

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70 Own translation.

71 CLAYSS, Service-learning experiences related to Covid-19 pandemic, [https://www.clayss.org.ar/CLAYSS\\_exp\\_pand\\_2020.html?fbclid=IwAR3x3gJv3lVX8DENgMmumFEA2VF1cwL8uSDdoMortjF55rtrpaxtO2PYix70](https://www.clayss.org.ar/CLAYSS_exp_pand_2020.html?fbclid=IwAR3x3gJv3lVX8DENgMmumFEA2VF1cwL8uSDdoMortjF55rtrpaxtO2PYix70)

It is impressive to observe how SL practice strengthens education and motivation of young people as they experience the appreciation of their solidarity actions by the community (Tapia, 2018). Let us continue to motivate and encourage young people who are already committing themselves in all parts of our global world, different gestures of solidarity in favour of the most vulnerable in our societies.

When young people discover that they can put all their skills at the service of the community, manage to feel that their life becomes truly fulfilled. In addition, they experience that their lives make sense by offering their hands to make a better world.

Let us continue encouraging students, as a Catholic University, to continue helping in vaccination projects, in community kitchens in popular neighbourhoods, in homes for the elderly or delivering virtual content on pedagogical subjects to children and adolescents of other educational levels.

May we exclaim, upon seeing these solidarity actions, the very words of the Holy Father:  
*How beautiful it is to see that young people are “street preachers” (callejeros de la fe), joyfully bringing Jesus to every street, every town square and every corner of the earth! (Pope Francis, 2013, EG, 106).*

## 6. Conclusion

The challenge of continuing to link SL with the message that the Synod on Young People has left us has still much more to contribute to the mission and identity of our Catholic Universities worldwide.

We must be willing to allow young students to play a leading role in our institutions, and to be the main stakeholders in the development of their everyday learning at the university. At the same time, invite them to live the task of joint responsibility when thinking, planning and executing actions that involve the entire university life.

By allowing this space, we will be realizing, in a concrete manner, the synodality that Pope Francis is fervently promoting and that young people are encouraged to live. As the final document of the Synod on Young People expresses to us:

*The participation of the young helped to “reawaken” synodality, which is a “constitutive element of the Church... Synodality characterizes both the life and the mission of the Church, which is the People of God formed of young and old, men and women of every culture and horizon, and the Body of Christ, in which we are*

*members one of another, beginning with those who are pushed to the margins and trampled upon. (Synod of Bishops, 2018b, 121).*

We must not deprive young students of being part of the construction and development of the institutional life. Let us ensure that they can collaborate, from a true joint responsibility, with the objectives that the University wants to propose itself, the paths that it wants to follow, the way to continue evangelizing and the possibility of being a University that walks together with the people.

Young people from our Catholic Universities around the world are prepared, we just need to make the decision to open the doors and allow a new Spirit to permeate the areas of the entire University.

Because, if we want the University to be a home for students, we should not forget the words that the Supreme Pontiff says:

*(...) to create a "home" is to create "a family". "It is to learn to feel connected to others by more than merely utilitarian and practical bonds, to be united in such a way as to feel that our life is a bit more human. To create a home is to let prophecy take flesh and make our hours and days less cold, less indifferent and anonymous. It is to create bonds by simple, everyday acts that all of us can perform. A home, as we all know, demands that everyone work together. No one can be indifferent or stand apart, since each is a stone needed to build the home. (Pope Francis, ChV, 217).*

Let us continue walking together to be able to make the dream of so many young students come true in Higher Education who every day, in person or virtually, enter our university institutions to be builders of a new society. Young people with a unique sensitivity for the pain of so many people who are unjustly expelled by the "throwaway culture". (Pope Francis, 2015, LS, 20)

Let us help them make that dream come true, with an ever-attentive listening, with a real and sustained accompaniment, with openness to dialogue and with the granting of leadership. So that they exercise a committed leadership in society and thus be able to achieve a true work for the common good.

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## 11. APPENDIX

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### Introduction

Here is a collection of quotations from Vatican documents that underpin the holistic education and social engagement of Catholic Institutions of Higher Education (ICHEs) for the common good.

It is possible to see a strong affinity between the texts selected and service-learning pedagogy, including explicit reference to it in the documents of the Global Compact on Education.

#### 1. Integral Education and Social Mission of CHEIs

*“Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy (...) Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good.” (GE, 1965, n.1)*

*“(...) The students of [Catholic Higher Education] institutions are molded into men truly outstanding in their training, ready to undertake weighty responsibilities in society and witness to the faith in the world (...).” (GE, 1965, n.10)*

*“Scientific and technological discoveries create an enormous economic and industrial growth, but they also inescapably require the correspondingly necessary search for meaning in order to guarantee that the new discoveries be used for the authentic good of individuals and of human society as a whole. If it is the responsibility of every University to search for such meaning, a Catholic University is called in a particular way to respond to this need: its Christian inspiration enables it to include the moral, spiritual and religious*

*dimension in its research, and to evaluate the attainments of science and technology in the perspective of the totality of the human person.” (John Paul II, 1990, ECE n. 7)*

*“A Catholic University, as any University, is immersed in human society; as an extension of its service to the Church, and always within its proper competence, it is called on to become an ever more effective instrument of cultural progress for individuals as well as for society.” (John Paul II, 1990, ECE n. 32)*

*“The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic University, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students. The Church is firmly committed to the integral growth of all men and women.” (John Paul II, 1990, ECE n. 34).*

*“Since, in many countries, the population of Catholic schools is characterized by a multiplicity of cultures and beliefs, religious formation in schools must be based on the awareness of the existing pluralism and constantly be able to be meaningful in contemporary society. This scenario is extremely diversified, therefore religion cannot be taught in the same way everywhere: in some situations, religion classes can provide the occasion where the Gospel is proclaimed for the first time; in other circumstances, educators will provide students the opportunity to experience interiority and prayer, prepare for the sacraments, and invite them to engage in youth movements or social service activities.” (CEC, 2014, 3 h)*

*“Catholic higher education aims at forming men and women who are able to engage in critical thinking, who are endowed with high level professionalism but also with rich humaneness, through which their skills are put to the service of the common good.” (CEC, 2014, 2 f)*

*“In particular, schools would not be a complete learning environment if, what pupils learnt, did not also become an occasion to serve the local community. (...) when students have the opportunity to experience how important what they learn is for their lives and their communities, their motivation does change. It would be advisable for teachers to provide their students with opportunities to realize the social impact of what they are studying, thus favoring the discovery of the link between school and life, as well as the development of a sense of responsibility and active citizenship.” (CEC, 2014, II 4)*

*“Teaching that only promotes repetitive learning, without favoring students’ active participation or sparking their curiosity, is not sufficiently challenging to elicit motivation. Learning through research and problem-solving develops different and more significant*

*cognitive and mental abilities, whereby students do more than just receiving information, while also stimulating teamwork.” (CEC, 2014, n. 3)*

*“A humanized education, therefore, does not just provide an educational service, but deals with its results in the overall context of the personal, moral and social abilities of those who participate in the educational process. (...). It is an education – at the same time – that is sound and open, that pulls down the walls of exclusivity, promoting the richness and diversity of individual talents and extending the classroom to embrace every corner of social experience in which education can generate solidarity, sharing and communion.” (CEC, 2017, n. 10)*

*“Education to fraternal humanism has the weighty responsibility of providing a formation of citizens so as to imbue them with an appropriate culture of dialogue. Moreover, the intercultural dimension is frequently experienced in classrooms of all levels, as well as in universities, so it is from there that we must start to spread the culture of dialogue. The framework of values in which a citizen properly formed to dialogue lives, thinks and acts is supported by relational principles (spontaneity, freedom, equality, consistency, peace and the common good), which beneficially and decisively become part of educational and formation programmes of those institutions and agencies that nurture fraternal humanism.” (CEC, 2017, n. 14)*

*“Globalizing hope is the specific mission of education to fraternal humanism. A mission that is fulfilled through establishing educational and pedagogical relationships that form to Christian love, that create groups based on solidarity, in which the common good is connected virtuously to the good of each of their components, transforming the contents of knowledge in line with the full realization of the person and his or her belonging to humanity. It is precisely Christian education that can perform this most important task, because it ‘gives birth, it makes grow, it is part of the dynamics of giving life. And the origin of life is the most gushing spring of hope’” (CEC, 2017, n. 18)*

*“(…) it is important that catechesis and preaching speak more directly and clearly about the social meaning of existence, the fraternal dimension of spirituality, our conviction of the inalienable dignity of each person, and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters.” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 86).*

## 2. Pope Francis Teachings Related to Service-Learning Pedagogy

### ▶ On Integral Education

*“There are three languages: the language of the head, the language of the heart, the language of the hands. Education must move on these three avenues. To teach how to think, to help how to develop good affections, and to accompany in doing.”*<sup>72</sup>  
(Papa Francesco, 2015)

*“... harmonize the language of the mind with the language of the heart and the language of the hands so that a person, a child, a youth may think what he feels and what he does; may feel what he thinks and what he does; may do what he feels and what he thinks. Combine this harmony within the very person, in the student, and in universal harmony, so that we all undertake the educational pact and, in so doing, emerge from this crisis of civilization that we are living in, and take the step that civilization itself demands of us.”* (Papa Francesco, 2015a).

### ▶ A Church going forward to the peripheries

*“When the Church is closed, she falls sick. Think of a room that has been closed for a year. When you go into it there is a smell of damp, many things are wrong with it. A Church closed in on herself is the same, a sick Church. The Church must step outside herself. To go where? To the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be, but she must step out. Jesus tells us: “Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Bear witness to the Gospel!” (cf. Mk 16:15). But what happens if we step outside ourselves? The same as can happen to anyone who comes out of the house and onto the street: an accident. But I tell you, I far prefer a Church that has had a few accidents to a Church that has fallen sick from being closed. Go out, go out!”* (Pope Francis, 2013a).

*“Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.”* (Pope Francis, 2013, EG 20)

*“Here is my first challenge to you: leave the places where there are many educators and go to the outskirts. (...) Look there for the needy, the poor. And they have one*

<sup>72</sup> English version retrieved from:  
<https://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/infoserv/news/inthepicture195.asp?cid=145250962045>

*thing that the young people in the richer neighbourhoods don't have: it's not their fault, but it's a sociological reality: they have the experience of survival, even cruelty, even hunger, even injustice. They have a wounded humanity. And I believe that our salvation comes from the wounds of a wounded man on the cross. They, from those wounds, draw wisdom, if there is a good educator to carry them forward. It is not a matter of going there to do charity, to teach how to read, to give something to eat... no! This is necessary, but temporary. This is the first step. The challenge - and I encourage you - is to go there to make them grow in humanity, in intelligence, in values, in habits, so that they can move forward and bring to others experiences that they do not know.” (Pope Francis, 2015)<sup>73</sup>*

*“The greatest failure an educator can have is educating within the walls. Educating within the walls of a selective culture, the walls of a culture of security, the walls of an affluent social sector that does not advance”. (Papa Francesco, 2015)<sup>74</sup>*

### ▸ Solidarity

*“The university as a place of formation in solidarity. The word solidarity does not belong solely to a Christian vocabulary. It is a word that is fundamental to human vocabulary. As I said today it is a word which in the present crisis, risks being eliminated from the dictionary. The discernment of reality, by taking on the moment of crisis, and the promotion of a culture of encounter and dialogue, orientate us to solidarity as a fundamental element for a renewal of our societies. (...) There is no future for any country, for any society, for our world, unless we are able to show greater solidarity. Solidarity, then, as a way of making history, as a vital context in which conflicts, tensions, and even those who oppose one another attain a harmony that generates life.” (Pope Francis, 2013b, 2c)*

*“To you, young people, I especially entrust the task of restoring solidarity to the heart of human culture. Faced with old and new forms of poverty – unemployment, migration and addictions of various kinds – we have the duty to be alert and thoughtful, avoiding the temptation to remain indifferent. We have to remember all those who feel unloved, who have no hope for the future and who have given up on life out of discouragement, disappointment or fear. We have to learn to be on the side of the poor, and not just indulge in rhetoric about the poor! Let us go out to meet them, look into their eyes and listen to them. The poor provide us with a concrete opportunity to encounter Christ himself, and to touch his suffering flesh. However (...) the poor are not just people to whom we can give*

73 Own translation.

74 Own translation.

*something. They have much to offer us and to teach us. How much we have to learn from the wisdom of the poor!"* (Pope Francis, 2014)

*"Education to fraternal humanism has the weighty responsibility of providing a formation of citizens so as to imbue them with an appropriate culture of dialogue. Moreover, the intercultural dimension is frequently experienced in classrooms of all levels, as well as in universities, so it is from there that we must start to spread the culture of dialogue. The framework of values in which a citizen properly formed to dialogue lives, thinks and acts is supported by relational principles (spontaneity, freedom, equality, consistency, peace and the common good), which beneficially and decisively become part of educational and formation programmes of those institutions and agencies that nurture fraternal humanism."* (CEC, 2017, n. 14)

*"I would like especially to mention solidarity, which, "as a moral virtue and social attitude born of personal conversion, calls for commitment on the part of those responsible for education and formation."* (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 114).

### ▶ Youth engagement

*"You know, dear young university students, that we cannot live without facing challenges, without responding to challenges. Whoever does not face challenges, whoever does not take up challenges, is not living. Your willingness and your abilities, combined with the power of the Holy Spirit who abides in each of us from the day of Baptism, allow you to be more than mere spectators, they allow you to be protagonists in contemporary events. Please do not watch life go by from the balcony! Mingle where the challenges are calling you to help carry life and development forward, in the struggle over human dignity, in the fight against poverty, in the battle for values and in the many battles we encounter each day."* (Pope Francis, 2013c).

*"At times, seeing a world so full of violence and selfishness, young people can be tempted to withdraw into small groups, shunning the challenges and issues posed by life in society and in the larger world. They may feel that they are experiencing fraternity and love, but their small group may in fact become nothing other than an extension of their own ego. This is even more serious if they think of the lay vocation simply as a form of service inside the Church: serving as lectors, acolytes, catechists, and so forth. They forget that the lay vocation is directed above all to charity within the family and to social and political charity. It is a concrete and faith-based commitment to the building of a new society. It involves living in the midst of society and the world in order to bring the Gospel everywhere, to work for the*

*growth of peace, harmony, justice, human rights and mercy, and thus for the extension of God's kingdom in this world.” (Pope Francis, 2019, ChV, n. 168)*

*“I ask young people to go beyond their small groups and to build “social friendship, where everyone works for the common good.” (Pope Francis, 2019, ChV n. 169)*

*“The Synod recognized that “albeit in a different way from earlier generations, social commitment is a specific feature of today’s young people. Alongside some who are indifferent, there are many others who are ready to commit themselves to initiatives of volunteer work, active citizenship and social solidarity. They need to be accompanied and encouraged to use their talents and skills creatively, and to be encouraged to take up their responsibilities. Social engagement and direct contact with the poor remain fundamental ways of finding or deepening one’s faith and the discernment of one’s vocation... It was also noted that the young are prepared to enter political life so as to build the common good.” (Pope Francis, 2019, ChV n. 170).*

▸ **Catholic Universities have to go beyond the classroom, to use curriculum and research to engage their students in solving real world problems**

*“My question to you, as educators, is this: Do you watch over your students, helping them to develop a critical sense, an open mind capable of caring for today’s world? A spirit capable of seeking new answers to the varied challenges that society sets before humanity today? Are you able to encourage them not to disregard the world around them, what is happening all over? Can you encourage them to do that? To make that possible, you need to take them outside the university lecture hall; their minds need to leave the classroom, their hearts must go out of the classroom. Does our life, with its uncertainties, its mysteries and its questions, find a place in the university curriculum or different academic activities?” (Pope Francis, 2015b)*

*“The classic methods of research are experiencing certain limits, more so when it is a question of a culture such as ours, which stimulates direct and immediate participation by all. Present-day culture demands new forms that are more inclusive of all those who make up social and hence educational realities. We see, then, the importance of broadening the concept of the educating community.*

*The challenge for the community is to not isolate itself from modes of knowledge, or, for that matter, to develop a body of knowledge with minimal concern about those for whom*

*it is intended. It is vital that the acquisition of knowledge lead to an interplay between the university classroom and the wisdom of the peoples who make up this richly blessed land.*

*Knowledge must always sense that it is at the service of life, and must confront it directly in order to keep progressing. Hence, the educational community cannot be reduced to classrooms and libraries but must progress continually towards participation. This dialogue can only take place on the basis of an episteme capable of “thinking in the plural”, that is, conscious of the interdisciplinary and interdependent nature of learning.” (Pope Francis, 2018)*

*“It is fair to ask ourselves: How do we help our students not to look at a university degree as synonym for more status, more money or more social prestige? They are not synonyms. Do we help them to see this preparation as a sign of greater responsibility for today’s problems, for the needs of the poorest, for the care of the environment? It is not enough to make analyses and descriptions of reality; it is necessary to generate spaces for real research, debates that generate alternatives to today’s problems. How necessary it is to get down to the concrete!” (Pope Francis, 2017, n.1)<sup>75</sup>*

*“The basic mission of a University is a continuous quest for truth through its research, and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society. A Catholic University participates in this mission with its own specific characteristics and purposes.” (John Paul II, 1990, ECE 30)*

*“One could object that such a university lecturer draws conclusions from faith and therefore cannot claim that they are valid for those who do not share this faith. But while it is true that they do not share the faith, they can recognise the ethical reason proposed to them. Behind the Catholic teacher stands a community of believers, in which, over the centuries of its existence, a certain wisdom of life has matured; a community that holds within itself a treasure trove of knowledge and ethical experience, which is important for the whole of humanity. In this sense, the teacher speaks not so much as a representative of a belief, but above all, as a witness to the validity of ethical reason.” (Pope Francis, 2017, n.2)<sup>76</sup>.*

### 3. Service-Learning in the Global Compact on Education

*“3. Educating to Serve, Educating is to Serve. Lastly, the third act of courage Pope Francis calls for is to form individuals who are willing to put themselves at the service of*

<sup>75</sup> Own translation.

<sup>76</sup> Own translation.

*the community. To be honest, this indication sheds an apt light on a truly decisive element of every educational action: educators cannot succeed fully in their educational action unless they commit to forming and shaping – in the people entrusted to their care – a full and real openness to the service of others, of all others, of the whole human community, starting with those who find themselves in the most exhausting and challenging situations. The true service of education is education to service. Moreover, educational research also increasingly recognizes the central dimension of service to others and the community as a tool and as an end of education itself. Think for example about the great development of Service Learning. This kind of research shows how service can be not only be a training activity among others (the importance of volunteer work in the training of young people is well recognized), but more radically how it can become the fundamental method through which all knowledge and skills can be transmitted and acquired. We could point to this process as a development from education to service to education as service, whereby our brethren are both the way and the goal of education.” (CEC, 2020, p. 16).*

*“No authentic, profound and enduring change is possible unless it starts from the different cultures, particularly those of the poor. A cultural covenant eschews a monolithic understanding of the identity of a particular place; it entails respect for diversity by offering opportunities for advancement and social integration to all” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 220).*

#### **4. Education and fraternity**

*“It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. Fraternity between all men and women. “Here we have a splendid secret that shows us how to dream and to turn our life into a wonderful adventure. No one can face life in isolation... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together”.<sup>[6]</sup> Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 8)*

*“A love capable of transcending borders is the basis of what in every city and country can be called “social friendship”. Genuine social friendship within a society makes true universal openness possible. This is a far cry from the false universalism of those who*

*constantly travel abroad because they cannot tolerate or love their own people. Those who look down on their own people tend to create within society categories of first and second class, people of greater or lesser dignity, people enjoying greater or fewer rights. In this way, they deny that there is room for everybody.” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 99)*

*“Education and upbringing, concern for others, a well-integrated view of life and spiritual growth: all these are essential for quality human relationships and for enabling society itself to react against injustices, aberrations and abuses of economic, technological, political and media power. Some liberal approaches ignore this factor of human weakness; they envisage a world that follows a determined order and is capable by itself of ensuring a bright future and providing solutions for every problem.” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 167)*

*“Authentic social dialogue involves the ability to respect the other’s point of view and to admit that it may include legitimate convictions and concerns. Based on their identity and experience, others have a contribution to make, and it is desirable that they should articulate their positions for the sake of a more fruitful public debate. When individuals or groups are consistent in their thinking, defend their values and convictions, and develop their arguments, this surely benefits society. Yet, this can only occur to the extent that there is genuine dialogue and openness to others. Indeed, “in a true spirit of dialogue, we grow in our ability to grasp the significance of what others say and do, even if we cannot accept it as our own conviction. In this way, it becomes possible to be frank and open about our beliefs, while continuing to discuss, to seek points of contact, and above all, to work and struggle together.” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 203).*

*“What is important is to create processes of encounter, processes that build a people that can accept differences. Let us arm our children with the weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter!” (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 217).*

*“The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society. Dialogue between the followers of different religions does not take place simply for the sake of diplomacy, consideration or tolerance. In the words of the Bishops of India, “the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love”. (Pope Francis, 2020, FT, 271).*

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In support of the Global Compact on Education

*Uniservitate* is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. It aims to generate a systemic change in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs), through the institutionalisation of service-learning (SL) as a tool to achieve its mission of an integral education and formation of agents of change committed to their community.

**“We will not change the world,  
if we do not change education”**

*Pope Francis*

## **2** Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church

We are pleased to present the book *Service-learning pedagogy and the teachings of the Catholic Church*, a polyhedral text, born in different parts of the world, an expression of different voices and an invitation to reflect on Higher Education in view of a greater commitment to the universal human family. Its intention is to contribute to the generation of Higher Education Institutions (university and non-university, Catholic and non-confessional) capable of networking and generating life, of learning and generating meaning in their being and from their knowledge and doing, for others and with others, and not only cloisters that live for themselves. It is a text with a plural, global and diverse perspective, which opens up dialogue and builds bridges that contribute to achieving a more fraternal society.

*Uniservitate is an initiative led by Porticus, with the general coordination of the Latin American Center for Service-learning (CLAYSS)*

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ISBN 978-987-4487-22-3



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Published in October 2021  
ISBN 978-987-4487-22-3

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